

PLAY



ISSUE
NO
205

CAPCOM'S
HORROR
SHOW

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

RESIDENT EVIL

Operation Raccoon City

THE TRUTH THEY DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW

revealed
FIFA 12
First ever details inside

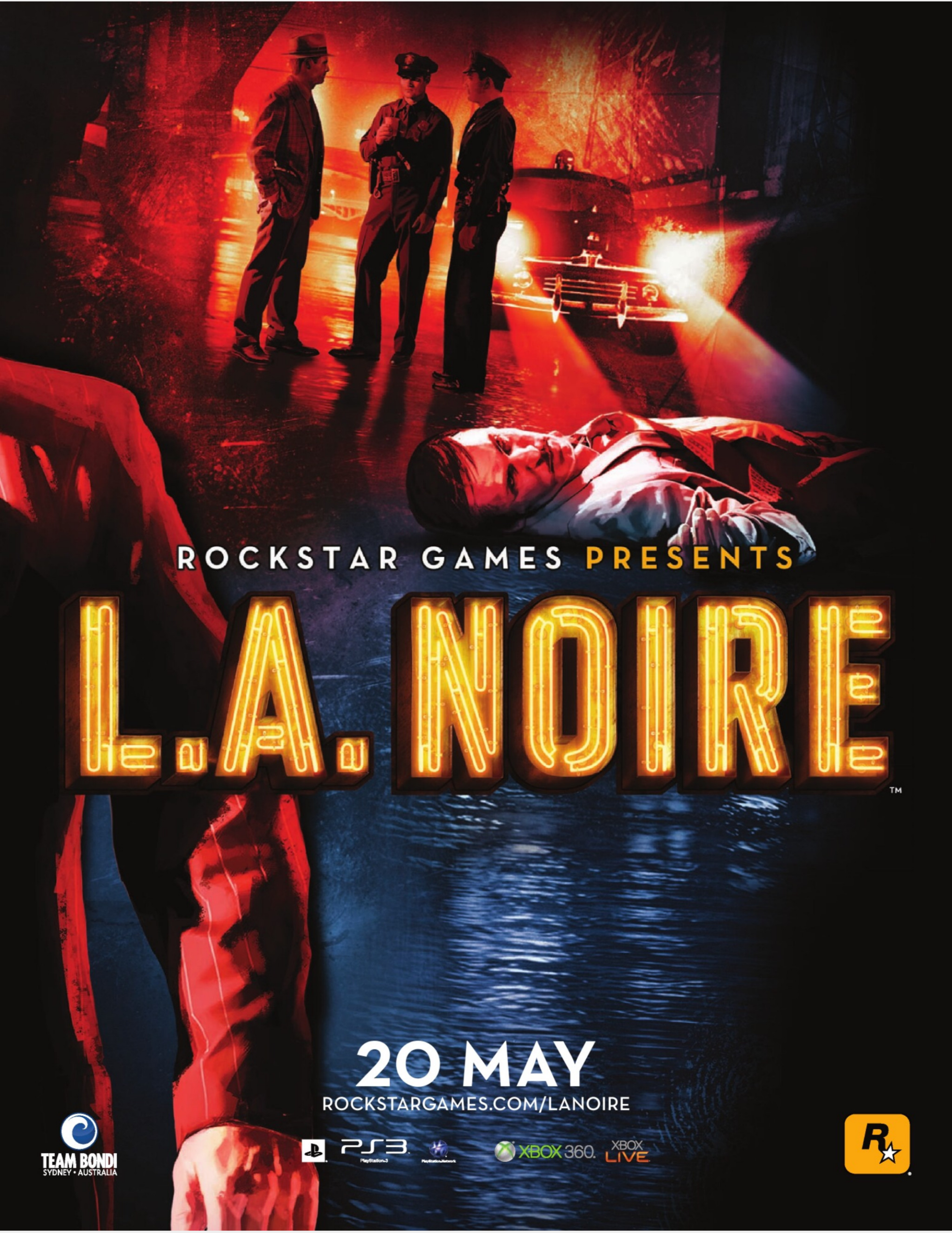
hands-on
DEAD ISLAND
We make a bloody mess and bring you the results

review
PORTAL 2
Why you must play Valve's sequel





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The background of the poster is a dark, moody scene. In the upper half, three men are standing in a wet, reflective street at night. One man on the left wears a fedora and a trench coat. The other two are in police uniforms. A vintage car is parked behind them, its headlights illuminating the wet pavement. In the lower half, a man in a suit lies face down on the ground. The overall color palette is dominated by reds, oranges, and blues, creating a noir atmosphere.

ROCKSTAR GAMES PRESENTS

L.A. NOIRE™

20 MAY

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TEAM BONDI
SYDNEY • AUSTRALIA



PS3
PlayStation 3



XBOX 360

XBOX
LIVE



Contents **PLAY**

PlayStation 3 PSN PSP 演劇端末

Your gateway to the esoteric world of PlayStation

reviews

- 80 Portal 2 PS3
- 82 Mortal Kombat PS3
- 84 SOCOM: Special Forces PS3
- 86 Operation Flashpoint: Red River PS3
- 88 Virtua Tennis 4 PS3
- 89 Patapon 3 PSP
- 90 Naruto Shippuden: Kizuna Drive PSP
- 90 Michael Jackson: The Experience PS3

features

- 24 Play Loves... Fictional Sport
- 27 Anatomy of... Shepard
- 32 Home Truths
- 40 Developer Graveyard
- 42 The Dungeon Master
- 48 Resident Evil: Why It Will Shock You
- 52 Resident Evil History

previews

- 56 FIFA 12 PS3
- 58 Dragon's Dogma PS3
- 60 inFamous 2 PS3
- 61 Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception PS3
- 62 Dead Island PS3
- 64 Dead Rising 2: Off The Record PS3
- 66 Supremacy MMA PS3
- 68 The Last Guardian PS3
- 70 Prototype 2 PS3
- 72 Street Fighter X Tekken PS3
- 74 Asura's Wrath PS3

essentials

08 Re:Play

Your letters answered by the experts. That's us, by the way.

10 Latest News

Reactions from the people that matter on the month's biggest stories, events and announcements.

22 Reload

All the latest from the world of Play online.

92 Network

Latest reviews from the PlayStation Network.

106 Playlist

Thinking of buying a PlayStation game? Don't make that purchase until you read our verdict.

48
exclusive

RESIDENT EVIL: OPERATION RACCOON CITY

The horror show behind Capcom's latest

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imagineshop.co.uk

for back issues, books and merchandise

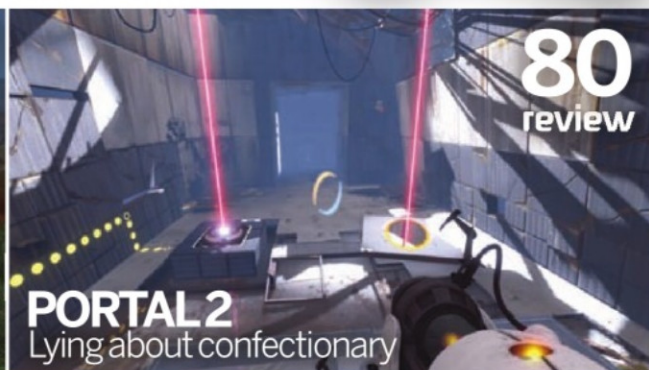


**SUBSCRIBE
& SAVE 30%
TURN TO PAGE 76**



58
preview

DRAGON'S DOGMA
Devil May Cry dev returns



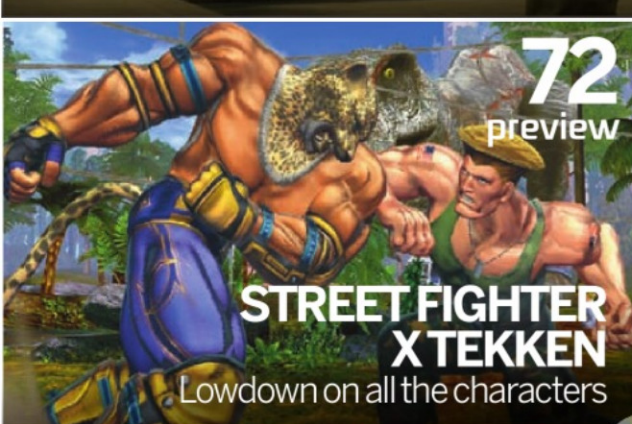
80
review

PORTAL 2
Lying about confectionary



32

HOMETRUTHS
Behind the scenes of PlayStation Home



72
preview

**STREET FIGHTER
X TEKKEN**
Lowdown on all the characters



42
feature

THE DUNGEON MASTER
Obsidian talks Dungeon Siege III

network and store reviews

- 92 Online FPS showdown
- 94 Red Faction: Battlegrounds
- 94 Moon Diver
- 94 Mass Effect 2: Arrival



96
PLAY HD

PLAY DVD

EXCLUSIVE features on this DVD



Latest trailers

All the latest from the world of PS3 gaming

- ▶ Batman: Arkham City
- ▶ Resi Evil: Operation Raccoon City
- ▶ Resistance 3
- ▶ L.A. Noire
- ▶ Portal 2

features

Behind the scenes and interviews

- ▶ Online Shooter showdown
- ▶ Battlefield 3 analysis
- ▶ The Darkness II

network

All the latest from the online gaming world

- ▶ Back To The Future
- ▶ Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow DLC
- ▶ Shift 2: Unleashed DLC

reviews

Hear what the **Play** team sounds like!

- ▶ SOCOM: Special Forces
- ▶ Operation Flashpoint: Red River
- ▶ Moon Diver

dvd-rom content

Wallpapers, software and movies to watch on your PS3 and PSP!

- ▶ PS3/PSP Wallpapers & Themes

PS3 wallpapers and themes

- ▶ Play Podcast

Catch up on what the **Play** team has been rambling about

- ▶ PC Software

FilemanagerPSP, iPSPMovieLoader, Lumox, PSPWare

- ▶ PSP Movies

Watch all the latest PSP trailers on your PSP!

Welcome **PLAY**

PlayStation 3 PSN PSP 演劇端末

The UK's best independent PlayStation magazine

Stuffed to the gills



It would be impossible to summarise this month in a single word. Not without making one up. Then I'd have to explain what it means. Which would defeat the purpose of summarising the month in a single word, as I'd only do that to save time and then having to explain what...

Let's get to the point. There's a lot of stuff in this issue. A lot. That's the monthly war cry

presentation went down at Capcom's huge Captivate event.

Then there are the games. We get hands-on with *Dragon's Dogma*, *Dead Island*, *Street Fighter X Tekken* and *FIFA 12*, while *Portal 2* heads up the review section, and we finally put the huge wave of FPS games to the test by comparing them online and crowning a winner – check the DVD to see how the current crop of FPS games fare online. Phew! Like I said, there's A LOT in this issue.

As always, I want YOUR feedback on what you love and hate about **Play**. I can't change how pink my face is (though I have tried in Photoshop

– see?) but everything else in the mag is fair game for your comment and opinion. Shout via email, Twitter, Facebook, forums and PSN with anything you want to share. Comments, complaints, trash talk, marriage proposals, we welcome everything. Try us out and see. Enjoy the issue.

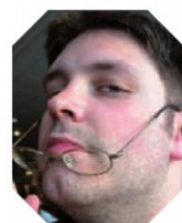
R King
Editor

We bring you exclusive behind-the-scenes info on Resident Evil

here but all you have to do is flick through these pages to see that it's true.

We've got a huge behind-the-scenes look at Home, where we talk to the people responsible for making the content, running the whole show and even a couple who got married on Sony's service. Obsidian CEO Feargus Urquhart also talks exclusively to **Play** about *Dungeon Siege III*, *Fallout: New Vegas* and *Alpha Protocol*, while we bring you exclusive behind-the-scenes info on *Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City* and how the

contributors



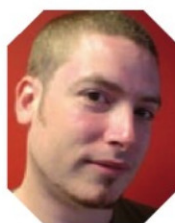
David Brown
Play readers, meet New Freelancer Number 1: David Brown. Formerly of *PC Zone* fame, he's the one who braved the fierce, deadly world of *Supremacy*

MMA to wrestle quotes out of the fighters for our preview. Which is a better way of saying he asked them relevant questions and they answered, which he transcribed when he got home and sent to us. But still!



Dave Scarborough
Meet Sort Of New Freelancer Number 2: Dave Scarborough. He's the one who ate KFC a few issues back for Playtest and this month he wrote

our monster Home Truths feature. True story: Ryan met Dave in Montreal last year while zipping his hoodie over his face and pretending to mug fellow press down an alleyway. Sigh. We're such professionals.



Dan Howdle
Meet Longtime Internal Freelancer Dan Howdle, or as we like to call him, Dan Howdell. He's been playing *Gears Of War 3* recently, which is obviously a massive

disappointment and only has four graphics because it r on Xsux lololol. That's how you do this trolling thing, right? Just imagine our poor sub Dan, breaking out in sweat trying not to correct that wonky grammar.

the **PLAY** promise

Play solemnly swears (raises right hand) to bring you the best PlayStation magazine that is humanly possible.

We will always bring you the most in-depth, impartial, honest reviews and will never bow down to PR or advertising pressure. We have some of the most experienced reviewers in

the industry and we're not afraid to use them. And we take our own screenshots so you can see what the game looks like *when you play it*. We will be the first to break the biggest stories, the first to cover the biggest games and in the most detailed way. We will only ever bang on about the very best PlayStation games, the ones that we would pay our own cash for. We aren't afraid of expressing an opinion, especially when it's for your benefit.

So don't expect our previews to simply regurgitate a load of internet or press release tosh – we'll be telling you whether a game is looking good or not, regardless of the stage of the code.

We want to fuel your passion for gaming like no other magazine and we want you to trust everything you read here. If you don't then you can simply stop buying it. That's how confident we are that you'll love **Play**. Promise.

PLAY

Imagine Publishing Ltd
Richmond House 33 Richmond Hill
Bournemouth Dorset BH2 6EZ
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586200
Web: www.play-mag.co.uk
blog.play-mag.co.uk
www.imagine-publishing.co.uk

Magazine team

Editor Ryan King
ryan.king@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586241

Art Editor Carl Milligan
Games Editor Chris McMahon
Deputy Editor Jon Gordon
Senior Staff Writer Ian Dransfield
Senior Sub Editor Dan Peel
Head of Design Ross Andrews
Editor In Chief Aaron Asadi

Contributors

Adam Barnes, David Brown, Ryan Butt, Dan Howdle, Matt Kamen, Simon Miller, Dave Scarborough

Cover image

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Advertising

Digital or printed media packs are available on request.

Advertising Director James Willmott
☎ 01202 586432
james.willmott@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Head of Sales Hang Deretz
☎ 01202 586442
hang.deretz@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Account Manager Paul Graham-Fielding
☎ 01202 586422
paul.graham-fielding@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Account Manager Alex Chavez
☎ 01202 586420
alex.chavez@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Cover disc

Head of Digital Mat Toor

Senior Multimedia Editor Steve Littton
playxtrahelp@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Multimedia Editor Matt Deeble

International

Play is available for licensing. Contact the International department to discuss partnership opportunities.

International Manager Cathy Blackman
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586401
licensing@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Subscriptions

Subscriptions Manager Lucy Nash
subscriptions@imagine-publishing.co.uk

For all Subscription Enquiries
Email play@servicehelpline.co.uk
☎ UK 0844 848 8404

☎ Overseas +44 1795 592 875
13-Issue subscription UK £51.90 / Europe £70 / ROW £80

Circulation

Circulation & Export Manager Darren Pearce
☎ 01202 586200

Production

Production Director Jane Hawkins
☎ 01202 586200

Founders

Managing Director Damian Butt
Finance Director Steven Boyd
Creative Director Mark Kendrick

Printing & Distribution

Printed by Wyndeham Heron, The Bentall Complex, Colchester Road, Heybridge, Maldon, Essex CM9 4NW
Distributed in the UK & Eire by Seymour Distribution, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT
☎ 0207 429 4000

Distributed in Australia by Gordon & Gotch, Equinox Centre, 18 Rodborough Road, Frenchs Forest, NSW 2086
☎ +61 2 9972 8800

Distributed in the Rest of the World by Marketforce, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU
☎ 0203 148 8105

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RE:PLAY



Look at all the letters! Just look at them! Wooooooooow!



This month's letters answered by:
Chris McMahon
'Quizmaster General'

Last night the **Play** team went to the Imagine Publishing pub quiz. Unfortunately we didn't win because none of the team spent the night beforehand reading the entirety of Wikipedia like I asked them to. I did. Did you know that one of the most famous letters ever written was from Albert Einstein to President Franklin Roosevelt about the development of the nuclear bomb? And did you know that The Royal Mail traces its history back to 1516? Ryan, Jon and Ian didn't know this stuff, which is why we LOST. It's also because Jon misunderstood my instructions. He spent the whole night reading Wookieepedia. He is now the foremost *Star Wars* expert on the entire Earth, though.

CONTACT US

POST Play

Imagine Publishing
Richmond House
33 Richmond Hill
Bournemouth
Dorset
BH2 6EZ

EMAIL

play@imagine-
publishing.co.uk

Rallying the troops

I am nearly 40 and have been gaming for over 30 years, and have seen and been involved in every generation of home gaming. I am married, have two children and have learned the fine art of patience. However, I have simply had enough of being treated so poorly as a consumer. I really wanted to like *Homefront*. I really did. But never in my life have I experienced such a disastrous gaming launch. During the insultingly brief campaign my PS3 froze four times in the four hours it took me to complete it. Unacceptable. I have over the course of the initial post-release three days been able to join precisely ONE multiplayer match, and every other time my console has locked up and required a rest. Unacceptable.

Where was the QA for this game? In no other area as consumers would we be willing to accept this kind of treatment, so why should we be even remotely willing to accept it from the videogame industry? I will not be told to be patient and wait for patches. If I pay for a brand-new product in good faith I expect for it to be fit for purpose as advertised, which *Homefront* is not. We, as gamers, need to understand that we *allow* ourselves to be treated this way, and that we need to begin to vote with our wallets. The only way to communicate our distaste for the ingrained flaws within the videogame industry is to cease preordering these types of games, and furthermore there needs to be an adjustment to the laissez-faire attitude of portions of the community who are so lenient to such behaviour and practices of developers and

who allow themselves to be abused as customers and also actively excuse the unacceptable practices so rampant in the industry. This needs to stop.

THQ has lost me as a consumer and I'll never

● Niall is NOT best pleased with *Homefront*'s flaws.



have faith in any game they release again. I've never felt so insulted by a game that it made me want to write such a statement but *Homefront* has been the last straw for me.

Niall Balmer

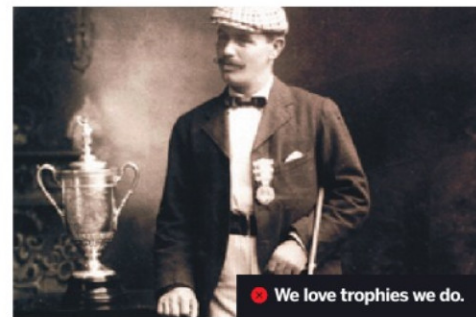
Wow. I had to cut 300 words out of this just to make it fit and I still have barely any space to reply. I'll just say, you go, Niall! Stick it to the man! It is an unacceptable practice, likely caused by deadlines and rushed development. Let's start our own Project Mayhem and show these guys who's boss.

A letter about Platinum Trophies

Hey guys. Hope you're being blessed by the world as I am each month by reading your mag. Keep it up! I just have one question. I love collecting Trophies and there's one thing I would like to know. What game in the entire PS3 library has been Platinumed by the most PSN users ever since Trophies first began?

Daniel Corso

Well, as we're all-knowing, omniscient ultra-beings when it comes to all things PlayStation, I can tell you that the number one most Platinumed game



is... *Uncharted 2*! Apparently *Assassin's Creed II* is second, and the original *Uncharted* third. I didn't just check it on Google or anything, honest.

Come together

I do love my exclusives, oh yes! Nothing feels better than rubbing Nathan Drake and his sexy body in an Xboxer's face. But, although they provide great ammunition for the console war, what use do they really have?



The stuff we want to hear about!



1

Should we abandon console exclusivity?

2

What sci-fi films should be made into games that haven't already?

3

What the hell is up with Dransfield's face?

✖ STUPID letter

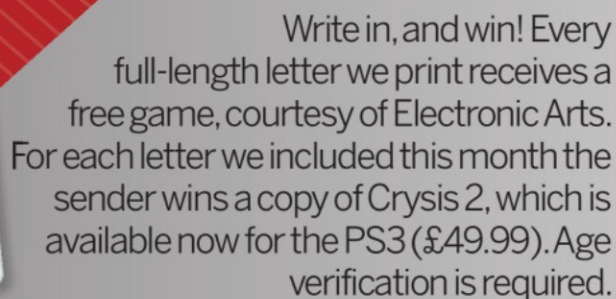


Avatar is big, stupid fun.

Avatarnation

Hello to everyone at **Play**. With regards to your constant *Avatar* bashing, it's not that so many people have poor taste, it's that certain videogame journalists, who really should stick to what they know, have no idea what a good film is. Rant over. Love the mag!
Martin Hughes

I feel quite bad putting you as the stupid letter of the month given that you expressed your love for the mag, but someone has to fill this space, and this month it is you, Martin. It is you because, let's be honest, games journalists are NEVER wrong about anything. We're infallible. And we say *Avatar* is a garish, unoriginal and hand-holding sci-fi. Give us a bit of *Moon* or *Blade Runner* over that any day.



● The Beatles said it best – “Let’s abandon console exclusivity!” They said something like that anyway.

James Ward

But do you not realise, James? DO YOU NOT REALISE? If we abandon exclusivity and everything is released on both consoles we'll undergo total protonic reversal! All life as we know it would stop instantaneously and every molecule in our bodies would explode at the speed of light. Actually... wait... that's crossing the streams in *Ghostbusters*. I'm always getting that mixed up with console exclusivity. Oh, before I go, "rubbing Nathan Drake and his sexy body in an Xboxers face"? Seriously?

How thick is wall?
Jeremy Usborne,
London
Depends.

Where on the body is skin the thinnest?
The Pub Quiz Guy, in the pub last night
 The eyelid, obviously. Although, even though I said this Jon Gordon ignored me and wrote 'elbow' anyway. No one ever listens to me. No wonder we lost.

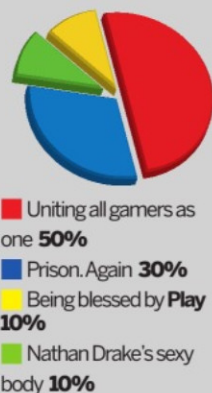
Resident Evil 4 HD
confirmed! How excited
are you?
Peter Longbottom,
Surrey
We're nine exciteds out
of ten possible exciteds.

What are we going to do once all the graphics have run out?

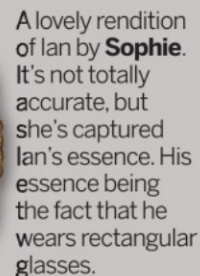
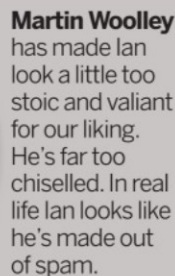
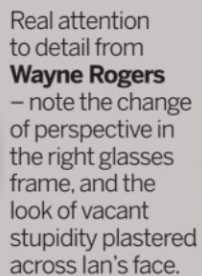
Paul Shoe, Peterborough

We'll have to find naturally occurring sources of graphics to power our games, mined from the very core of the Earth.

**THIS MONTH, YOU'VE
BEEN TALKING ABOUT...**



A few issues ago we asked you to draw a portrait of our very own Ian Dransfield. So far we've had three entries, but we want more! Send in your entries to play@imagine-publishing.co.uk



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Choice topics from the Play forum.
Join the discussion at **www.play-mag.co.uk**

SUBJECT: PLAY MAGAZINE DISCUSSION

 **Topic: Ask us anything... just about**
Was there many canaries on the canary islands? Or is it one of those places that likes to lie in its name like Turkey not having any Turkey and Greece not being greasy?
kev schmit

SUBJECT: PLAY MAGAZINE DISCUSSION

Topic: Ask us anything... What do you want to see from Assassin's Creed III?
The next game should be set in Wales
key schmit

SUBJECT: GENERAL GAMING

 **Topic:** Chris McMahon's Hollywood career
I'LL BE BACK... once I've got me chips from de shop.
Dey-do-doh-don't-de-doh the bossman

word on the tweet



What I really need in this new office is a cat to stroke. I've already started saying 'gentlemen' to visitors and rotating in my chair."

★ STAR letter

PlayStation jailbreak



A fine selection of PS2 games is headed your way, Chris.

I was really interested with the letters you published in issue 199 from Mr Solomon in Full Sutton Prison and the reply from the prison officer in issue 202. I agree with both of those contributions to your fine magazine. I work as a prison officer at a Category C jail in Yorkshire and can vouch for the benefits of the use of PS2s in the prison system. It brings together all groups of lads with no difference to race, religion, or what area of the country they are from. We often find lads playing *FIFA* or *PES* as the teams they support. During

the Christmas period we had a knockout competition running with a prize for the winners. The only issue I have is the lack of available games they can get as they are only able to order from Argos. So if anyone knows of a good company out there that sells preowned or new games and produces a catalogue (as the lads aren't allowed internet access) tell them to get in touch. There are a lot of lads and ladies in the prison system with money to spend on games but no access to spend it.

Christopher Bashford

Wow, **Play** really is read in a lot of prisons! It's always good to hear about games bringing people together. Unfortunately there are barely any such catalogues these days, with videogame purchasing and selling predominately performed online, and fewer and fewer websites are bothering with PS2 games. But we're amazingly generous here at **Play**, and along with your PS3 copy of *Crysis 2* we're also going to send six PS2 games for the lads at your prison. It's not much, but we're happy to do what we can.

INSTALL

Where fact + opinion ÷ PlayStation = the truth

Contents

12 Our verdict on the Xperia Play
We get hands-on with the PlayStation Phone

13 PSP2 price a problem
NGP to price out young gamers, according to Arc System Works

14 Brink calls out COD and co
Splash Damage aims to change the online FPS landscape

16 Deus Ex: Human Revolution Q&A
We chat to the man behind Human Revolution's music

Plus the regulars...

15 Instant expert

17 Charts

18 The Fanboy

20 The Vault

22 Reload

28 And Finally...



"Atmosphere and environment are critical to the F.E.A.R. 3 experience" – Ben Cureton, systems designer, Day 1 Studios, p.17

PRE-E3: THE BIG QUESTION

Play vs industry analyst vs readers. Who will win?

INDUSTRY EXPERT

Will Grand Theft Auto V be announced?

Jesse Divnich

VP capital research and communications, EEDAR:

"Last year, I made a similar prediction at right about this same time on *GTA V* appearing at E3 2010. That quote made a lot of headlines, and although rare, I was wrong. I don't think it would be fair for me to take another stab at *GTA V*'s release date. I refuse to let it become my white whale."

Will the NGP get a new name?

Jesse Divnich

VP capital research and communications, EEDAR:

"Personally, I find the abbreviated NGP name catchy. Maybe they will stick with it? But given that the NGP is set to be released in the next 12 months, it wouldn't be entirely surprising for Sony to announce its official name."

READERS

the bossman

Play Forumeite:

"I don't think so, I think it might be announced closer to Christmas."

kev schmit

Play Forumeite:

"Yes, I think it will be, Rockstar need to release a game soon because it's been a while since *Red Dead Redemption* was out. And the chances of it being a *GTA* game is quite high."

E3 Whispers

Twisted Metal, Resistance 3, Uncharted 3 and The Last Guardian will all be playable at E3.

Scrum

Play Forumeite:

"The NGP will get a name and it will be called Terrence."

the bossman

Play Forumeite:

"I think it will, probably called a quirky name, something totally different from PSP, or they take the easy option and call it PSP2, or NGPSP, next-gen PSP, which is similar to what it has been coined as for a little while now."

PLAY

@PlayMagChris

Play Games Editor:

"With *L.A. Noire* just coming out and *Max Payne 3* PR well underway, it makes sense for Rockstar to put the spotlight on its farther-out titles, and anything shown of *GTA V* will steal the show. It might want to distance *GTA V* from the glitz and glamour of E3 and show it off when there are less distractions."

@PlayMaglan

Play Senior Staff Writer:

"It will be, as Sony has always said it's going to give it a real name. As it's out the end of the year, we need a few months to get the name into the hearts and minds of the people. If it doesn't continue the PlayStation Portable name then I'll be mad. But it would be understandable. PlayStation... Device... For Hands?"



Need To Know IMPORTANT GAMING NEWS YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS



Tony Hawk still alive

That's the game series rather than the man himself (we hope). Speaking to Pixelated Geek, Hawk revealed that there is still a game in development and is hoping to see it released next year. There had been fears that the *Tony Hawk* series had been killed off after poor sales of *Tony Hawk Shred*.



Mass Effect anime inbound

BioWare is teaming up with FUNimation and TO Entertainment to bring the *Mass Effect* universe to the world of anime. EA has previously brought *Dante's Inferno* and *Dead Space* to the animation world. FUNimation previously worked on the superb *Afro Samurai*.



SSX learns from NASA

The mountains and tracks in the upcoming *SSX* game for PS3 took its inspiration from NASA-made 3D maps. The *SSX* team in Vancouver used these real-world mountain maps as part of its early planning and then began amping them up with some more outlandish features in true *SSX* style.

E3 Whispers

Quantic Dream is in discussions with Sony to announce one of its new titles.

NS

word on the tweet



Jonatchoo

"Gettin your iPhone scanned to get into a plane is awesome. No wonder cyberpunk literature is kinda dormant now. Our times are cyberpunk!!!"

Deus Ex art director Jonathan Jacques-Belletête is enjoying modern times.

E3 Sony Conference
6 June @ 5pm (7 June 1am in the UK)
Los Angeles Memorial Sports Arena

Will a PS3 price drop be announced?

Jesse Divnich

VP capital research and communications, EEDAR:

"If we look at the success the Xbox 360 Slim achieved, without any price drop, I have to question whether we've witnessed the end of the traditional E3 price cuts? The goal of the manufacturers has been to incorporate new tech and larger hard drives instead of doing a discount."

Will any new Sony exclusives be revealed?

Jesse Divnich

VP capital research and communications, EEDAR:

"Sony has the strongest portfolio of properties in the industry. They're leaps and bounds ahead of Microsoft in the IP department. There's no doubt Sony will make some type of announcement regarding both new and returning franchises, but which ones I don't know."

Who will 'win' E3?

Jesse Divnich

VP capital research and communications, EEDAR:

"It's tough to predict E3 winners, especially since we are all in the dark about any announcements. But if I had to predict one winner, I'd go with Nintendo. They have an impeccable E3 track record. I wouldn't be surprised if they dropped a Mushroom Kingdom-sized announcement on us."

Scrum

Play Forumite:

"I don't think the price will drop but Sony will announce an improved PS3 (like they did last year)."

kev schmit

Play Forumite:

"Yeah hopefully, then all those bloody Xbox 360 fanboys can't use the price of the console as an excuse to not getting one or that the 360 is better for being cheaper."

E3 Whispers

Sony Santa Monica will be announcing its new project during the keynote.

the bossman

Play Forumite:

"Maybe a few RPG games or some MMORPGs. It would be good to get a few exclusive third-person games."

kev schmit

Play Forumite:

"Yes, I will be expecting a Sony exclusive to be announced. Since I heard more exclusives will be on the way, although I haven't got a clue what they will be. Hopefully involving chimps."

E3 Whispers

Metal Gear Solid Trilogy to get an HD remake announcement.

Scrum

Play Forumite:

"I'll guess the big hitters at the end of the year – *Battlefield 3*, *Uncharted 3*, *Resistance 3*, *Skyrim*... Activision will probably release loads about *Call Of Duty*. Also possibly *Mass Effect 3*. So a good E3 for trilogy-completers which can only help Sony when they have two 'threequels' out this year."

kev schmit

Play Forumite:

"I WILL WIN E3!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"



@PlayMagJon

Play News Editor:

"E3 hasn't been the place for price drop talk in a long time. That tends to be held off until gamescom in Germany, which is closer to the mad buying season that tends to kick off in September. Some new bundle could be on the cards, though."

@PlayMagJon

Play News Editor:

"I think there's a good chance Sony will be announcing at least one new game that we haven't seen before at E3 or in the lead up to E3. There's been talk that it will be talking as much about things happening in 2012 as in 2011, which will be a change from recent years in LA. A new *Quantic Dream* game or *God Of War* spin-off seem like the most likely options."

@PlayMagJon

Play News Editor:

"Obviously I'm rooting for Sony in this battle and with the games it has to show off alongside more NGP details it's difficult to predict anything else. However, if Nintendo or Microsoft announce a new console the balance could be shifted in their favour."

Who will be right?
Keep an eye on
www.play-mag.co.uk
from 7-9 June for all the latest E3 news, analysis and opinion

Did we mention it does games?

Five games you should try on your phoneStation



RECKLESS RACING This racer has been doing the rounds for a while now, but its popularity hasn't receded on iPhone, iPad or Android. Granted, it isn't specifically designed for the Xperia Play, but that doesn't stop it from being a fun racing game.

GUN BROS

The Xperia Play has dual touchpads. What this means is it's ideal for twin-stick shooters. Guess what kind of game *Gun Bros* is. It's not the best game of this type, but it is a laugh and helps highlight the differences between touch screen and physical controllers.



SUPER KO BOXING 2 This is a game 'heavily inspired by' the *Punch-Out!* titles on Nintendo's consoles. It's also a game 'heavily inspired by' how much fun those games were. It's a good-looking, cartoony boxing game and while it won't last forever, it's good for getting stressed out on a bus ride.

CYBERLORDS ARCOLOGY

We're not convinced by this one. It's not the usual throwaway nonsense you get from mobile gaming, instead being a cyberpunk RPG with a point-and-click interface. Just don't blame us if you hate it.



MEDIEVIL

A solid platformer from the PlayStation era and obviously a game that works perfectly with the Xperia Play's control scheme, *MediEvil* is well worth a look to pad out your PSone collection.



Xperia Play as played by Play

We managed to nab ourselves a PlayStation Phone, so now you can read what we thought of it

IT'S A PHONE!

The part that we were overlooking for quite a while until somebody wandered over and reminded us that the Xperia Play is, first and foremost, a smartphone. We can now say with confidence that it is *indeed* a smartphone and does *indeed* have all of the functions we have come to expect from these hand-tablets from the future: decent camera, hundreds of apps, internet, email and the ability to make phone calls. Can't complain there then.

GAMING JOY

It's all well and good making a phone that's suited to playing games, but there needs to be something to actually play on the ruddy thing to make it worthwhile. Fortunately there were around 60 games optimised for Xperia Play released at the same time as the phone, including six PSone classics. All take advantage of the hardware in a far better way than standard Android Marketplace games do, though we did struggle to find many brilliant games.



HARD WARE?

Early photos of the Xperia Play didn't fill us with all of the joys of spring, looking as it did like a bargain bin version of the PSPgo. Fortunately it manages – somehow – to look a lot better in the flesh. Though still with a whiff of that cheapo basket, truth be told. That may be the case, but it certainly feels sturdy enough and doesn't come across as if it will shatter as soon as you look at it funny.

THE CONTROLS

Smartphones are infamous among many gamers for their controls, offering as they do the dreaded touch screen/virtual pad solutions. As you're probably well aware, the Xperia Play has a controller section very similar to that of the PSPgo, and as such is far better suited to gaming. All the same, we found the touchpads – taking on the role of dual analogue sticks – quite difficult to use with our fat thumbs. Though maybe that's just us.

But how does it smell?

It's a new Sony gaming product, hence we have to go back to our classic, unique-to-Play test for the Xperia Play: sniffing it.

Turns out it smells faintly of gammon, but not in an entirely terrible way. That and warm plastic.

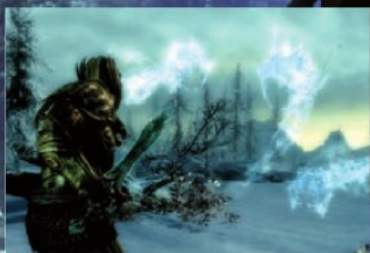


REASONS WHY...

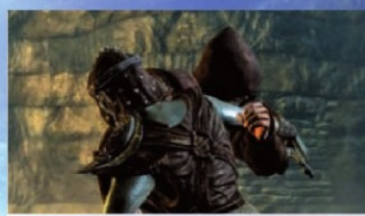
Skyrim is going to change gaming forever



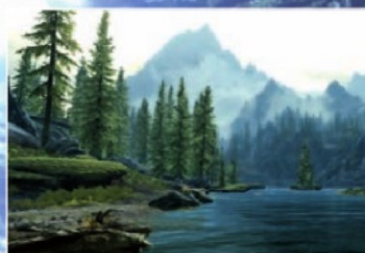
MAGIC MOMENTS: Particle effects and physics have seen magic get a much better treatment this generation, but *Skyrim* is taking things up a notch. The effects in this game promise to dwarf anything we've witnessed before.



YOU ARE THE HERO: Lots of games claim to give you choice, but few games give you so much control of how you play, who you are and what you do. Join guilds, take or reject quests. *Elder Scrolls* has always been about true freedom and exploration.



IT WILL DRIVE YOU: We've talked plenty about *Elder Scrolls*' new engine and how much better it looks, but just imagine what *Fallout 4* will look like with this tech. Imagine what the expansion packs and DLC will achieve. Things will never be the same.



IT'S HOW YOU USE IT: Size that is. The region of *Skyrim* is around the same size as that of *Cyrodill* – about 16 square miles. However, the cities of *Skyrim* are larger than *Oblivion*'s and over 130 dungeons have been promised. That sounds more than large enough to us.



HAND-MADE FEEL: A team of designers created each of the dungeons and where the landscapes were once generated in-engine for *Oblivion*, they have all been designed and created by hand in *Skyrim*. That should make this game look different to anything you've seen before.

Read More!

Check out our full interview with Arc System Works at www.play-mag.co.uk/interview

PSP2 price a problem

New Sony handheld could be too expensive for young gamers

Sony's Next Generation Portable isn't being aimed at younger gamers and its price is a cause for concern, according to Arc System Works, maker of *BlazBlue* and *Guilty Gear*. As part of an extensive discussion with *Play* recently director Daisuke Ishiwatari and producer Toshimichi Mori expressed their interest in the new hardware, but are wary that it could alienate one of the most important audiences of the current PSP.

"I'm very interested in the NGP, particularly the back panel. That could be very interesting," Mori revealed to us, before expressing some concern about the likely price. "If it's less than say £150 then it may be okay, but at the moment it is quite a bit above that."

Mori's last game, *BlazBlue*, has enjoyed some success on PSP due to the fact that its

comparative costs are much lower and therefore easier for younger gamers to afford. *Guilty Gear* director Ishiwatari believes Sony could lose out to its competitors with the PSP2. "I don't believe Sony are making the NGP appealing to the younger generation," he said. "It seems to be aiming more at the core gamers and trying to expand the horizon of the game itself. On the other hand, Nintendo is aiming at a younger generation and to lower the price it has limited the specs of the machine."



QUESTION

Has *Prey 2* lost its way?

BETHESDA AND HUMAN Head Studios have teamed up to bring *Prey 2* over to the PS3. Given the reception enjoyed by the original *Prey* on Xbox 360 and PC this would seem to be a reason to rejoice, but as details began to come through we had to wonder if someone had forgotten what made *Prey* so enjoyable.

Puzzling question

The alarm bells started ringing with the news that *Prey 2* would not feature any of the portal or gravity gameplay that helped the original game stand out from the crowd. The intention is to make *Prey* less of a puzzler and more focused on being a shooter.



Open worlds

The other reason for losing those features is a new location, the planet Exodus. This is an open world that you can explore at your leisure, speaking with NPCs and taking on quests. There will be no multiplayer mode, perhaps as a result of this.



Name that game

The hottest of products *Prey 2* seems to be drawing influence from is long and broad. On top of the *Riddick* games and *Mass Effect* we've also heard references to *Mirror's Edge* (there's parkour), the movie *Blade Runner* and *Borderlands*. What a mix.



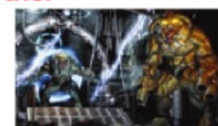
Xbot heaven

It's no great surprise since PS3 didn't get the original game, but *Prey 2* is being developed with the 360 as the lead platform. That's not a tragedy, but given our experience of other games that lead on the 360 we'll have to be cautious.



Bounty bother

The lead character is called Killian Samuels. He's a bounty hunter, but used to be a sheriff and prison guard. So basically it's *Riddick*, *Clint Eastwood* and *Boba Fett* in one. And he's got the word 'kill' in his name. Clearly he's destined for greatness.



ANSWER:

We're concerned, but hope to be proved wrong

INSTALL

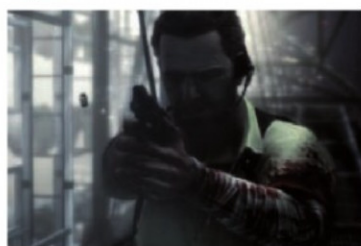
Max Payne 3 info revealed

Everything you need to know



WHEN MAX PAYNE 3 was outed in 2009 we were shocked to see the once trim dual-wielding master had become a pudgy alcoholic. It wasn't the direction we expected from Rockstar. Now we have some serious info on *Max Payne 3*, so what have we learnt?

RETURN OF THE MC Original *Max Payne* voice actor James McCafferty will return to the role, giving both his voice and motion capture time to the character.



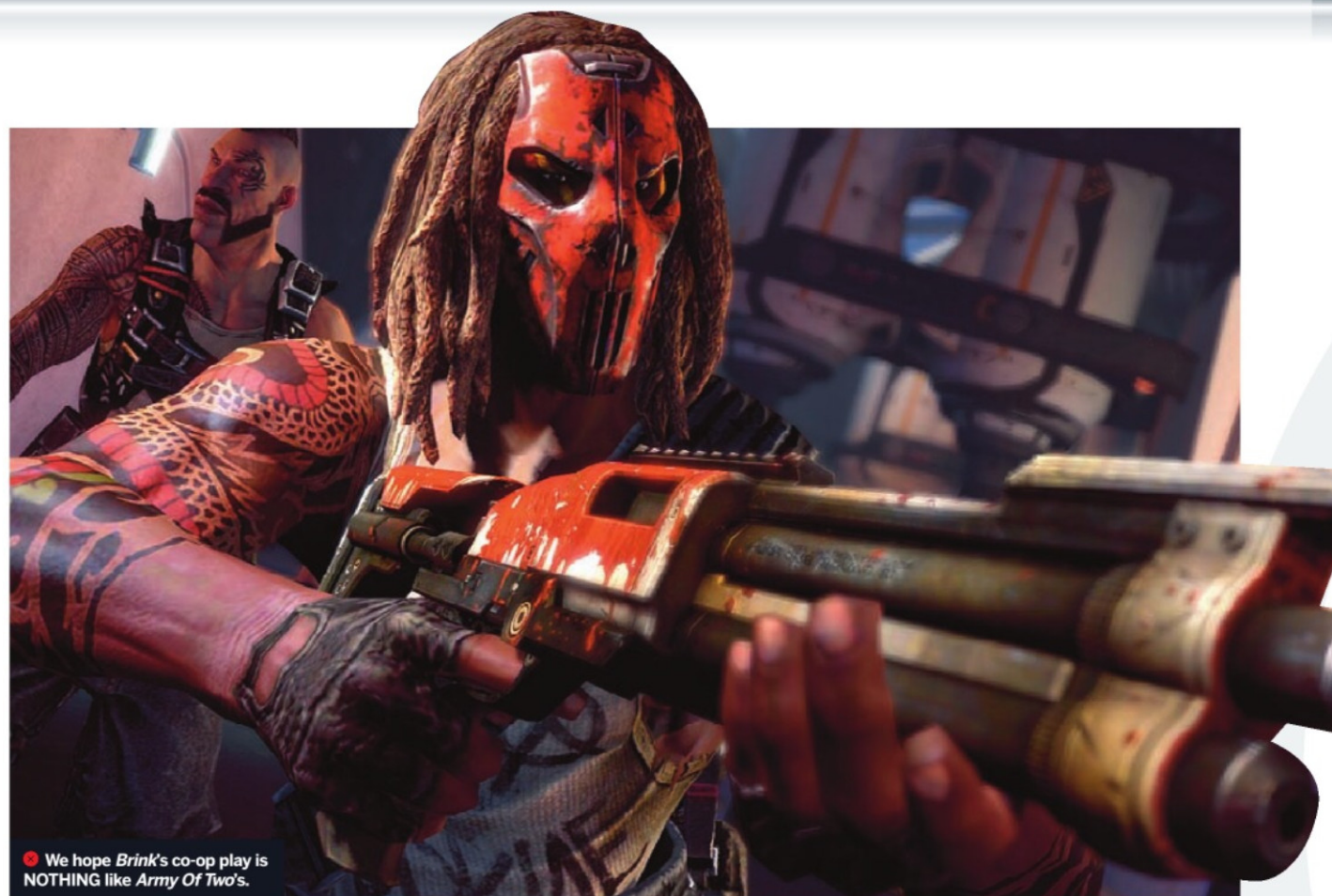
FOUR FOR ONE *Max Payne 3* has ended up being a collaborative effort between four of Rockstar's development teams. Vancouver, New England, Toronto and London have all had their part to play.

RED DEAD RIGHT A few features appear to be carrying over from *Red Dead Redemption*. Weapon selection will be on a wheel, you'll be able to take cover and bullet time will be recharged through kills.



DESTRUCTION DERBY Environmental damage is a new feature for the *Max Payne* series that Rockstar is adding to the mix. Seems like the perfect thing to add to a game as action packed and insane as *Max Payne*.

NATURAL HIGH Rockstar is evolving the Euphoria engine for *Max Payne 3* having built it up in *GTA IV* and *Red Dead*. Expect fluid animation and interaction with the world around you.



● We hope *Brink's* co-op play is NOTHING like *Army Of Two's*.

Brink calls out COD and co

Online FPS games unfair and unbalanced, says Splash Damage

Brink is looking to save the FPS genre from itself, according to Splash Damage as it draws upon its ten years of online shooter experience to make the most fun, balanced and accessible shooter on PS3. Speaking to **Play**, lead writer Ed Stern explained to us the impediments to fun he has seen again and again with online shooters and how *Brink* is going to fix them all.

"We've had ten years working out what does and doesn't work with shooters and with the online experience,"

Stern insisted. "We are fully aware that both the best and worst times we've had as gamers have been online."

First up is balance, not just of classes or abilities, but between teams. "One problem you get a lot is that when one team starts dominating, they never stop dominating," Stern said. "We're not going to accelerate that by having this unbalancing anvil crash down and make sure you can never get back in the game... So, no air strikes, no helicopters, because that's not skill based; it's not something that you've done."

Genuine co-op play is what *Brink* is all about and Stern explained a little of

how that is encouraged by the game's XP system, which promotes co-op moves rather than kills. "If you look at our scoreboard at the end it's all on XP and we don't give very much XP for kills, because otherwise you get medics who won't revive, you get soldiers who don't hand out ammo and whatever the gameplay mode is they're basically playing deathmatch."

It's an assessment of the current online shooter world that rings true given our experiences, too, and while there's a place for such games and they will continue to be hugely successful we're looking forward to seeing what *Brink* brings to the table.



We've just been wowed with a presentation on *Asura's Wrath* at Capcom Captivate. Director Seiji Shimoda, producer Kazuhiro Tsuchiya and CyberConnect2 CEO Hiroshi Matsuyama have shown us gameplay of a demi-god towering over Earth as he attempts to crush Asura with his finger. **Play** cuts the crap and asks the question that really matters. We've seen a huge boss – will we see a really, really tiny boss?

All three roar with laughter. "What I can say is we're not just going to try to surprise you with size alone," explains Shimoda.

"There are different ways we will try to shock you with the bosses in the game."

"Bosses have to be big because they have to be powerful sometimes but they don't all have to be big," continues Matsuyama. "We want to make some of those big bosses but there are bosses of all different sizes and speeds. We want to make sure bosses fill you with that feeling of fear and anxiety when you have to face them. We're going to have all different types of bosses in this game."

Will Asura's Wrath have a really, really tiny boss?

INSTANT EXPERT

All of the pros with none of the prose



LOCATION SCOUTING

Events from *Assassin's Creed II* seemed to suggest a multiple location game, at least for Desmond as he seeks several temples left by 'Those Who Came Before'. However, *Brotherhood* dropped massive hints of the historic period the Animus would send us to.

REVOLTING TIMES

That one appearance of the cap and the eye is on the Declaration of the Rights of Man, an incredibly important document from the French Revolution.

DA VINCI'S CODE

At the end of the recent *Da Vinci Disappearance* DLC Ezio finds a new message. The numbers he is given are actually longitude and latitude for a small town in New York state, USA.

THE HUNT FOR EDEN

The secret messages left by Subject 16 in *ACII* showed 'Adam and Eve' escaping from some sort of futuristic world and work camp. The final flash of binary code at the end spells out 'EDEN'. Could this be what Desmond must ultimately find.

LAND OF THE FREE

The Phrygian Cap and Masonic Eye from the end of *Brotherhood* are also heavily associated with American Independence. George Washington has been identified by Subject 16 as a wielder of a piece of eden.

THE CAP AND EYE

At the end of *Brotherhood* Desmond is shown a new message from 'Those Who Came Before' featuring a Phrygian Cap and the Masonic Eye. Shaun Hastings remarks they appear together in only one place.

ASSASSIN'S CREED III

Developer: Ubisoft Montreal Publisher: Ubisoft

ETA: October



SURVEY THE FIELD

A survey for *Assassin's Creed* fans released by Ubisoft has suggested some areas it is looking to improve and build upon with its next game. Foremost among these improvements are more co-op and team based multiplayer modes.

CRAFTY BUNCH

Another interesting suggestion was the addition of weapon crafting and creating as a gameplay mechanic to customise your arsenal in the next game.

STAT ATTACK

8million

PlayStation Move units sold

DOS & DON'TS

Important lessons from Play this month

Read our reviews of all these games starting on page 79



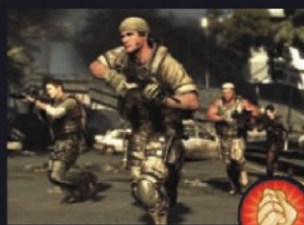
DO: Find a friend to play through *Portal 2* with you in co-op as you will be missing out on a real treat if you don't.



DON'T: Worry too much about messing things up in *L.A. Noire*. Failure is an option. Not a popular option, but an option all the same.



DO: Find a *Mortal Kombat* character you like and really stick with them for a while so you can master their combos and specials.



DON'T: Break your DualShock or PlayStation Move controller playing *SOCOM*. Ian nearly did on a number of occasions.

WHAT WE WANT TO SEE

"I want" doesn't get. Unless it does

1 Reddit on the XMB

A Reddit tab on the XMB, meaning we're never too far from browsing the best website in the world (that looks like it was designed by a moron in 1996).



2 Less Naruto

A broader Want than we usually go with, but no less crucial to the development of the PlayStation brand. Just, like, stop it with the *Naruto* games. They're annoying. That's a good enough reason.



3 Sky Player integration

Whatever you may think of Sky – it shows the football. Xbox 360 owners already get it, so why don't we? iPlayer is all well and good, but Premiership football would be a step-up for PlayStation's loyal followers.

4 Cheaper full PS3 games

We don't want to seem ungrateful, but the full games through the PSN Store are generally massively overpriced. They're not in the realms of Xbox Live's Games On Demand service, but they still cost far more than new copies do from most online and offline retailers. Also: we like cheap things, as we're tight.



5 A barbecue attachment

Wait – there is logic here. It's approaching the summer, so why doesn't some aspiring young peripheral manufacturer release a USB-powered BBQ attachment for PS3? Burgers and gaming: brilliant. What do you mean 'worst idea ever'? Sorry.



WWWTS news:

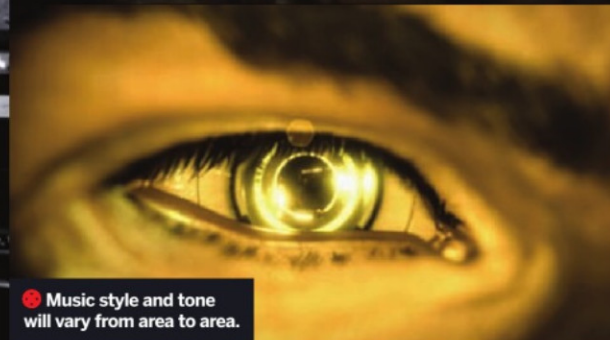
We wanted to know what was going on with PlayStation Suite, then the Xperia Play came out. Then we realised we still have no idea what's going on with it. Sigh.



Deus Ex: Human Revolution

Q&A

Composer Michael McCann, the man behind the music for Eidos Montreal's cyberpunk thriller, sits down for a chat with Play



⚙️ Music style and tone will vary from area to area.



⚙️ The score will have an emotional and organic feel to fit in with the prequel's style.

Deus Ex is a game renowned for its atmosphere and setting, but thanks to modern sound technology in games does more weight now lay on the music to create that?

I'm not sure if it's a matter of more weight – since all elements of gaming have advanced along with sound technology. Advances in graphics, lighting, map design, music/sound technology, all help make the experience and atmosphere more immersive and sophisticated.

Because of its cyberpunk roots the Deus Ex series is often compared

visually to Ridley Scott's Blade Runner. Musically is that movie also an important touchstone?

There isn't a heavy influence from the electronic side of *Blade Runner*, as there were more contemporary electronic scores that had a stronger influence on me. However, what has always inspired me about that score is the use of vocals. In particular the cues *Tales From the Future* featuring Demis Roussos, and *Rachel's Song* featuring Mary Hopkins. What I like is that the vocals come across as an instrument, and not as lyrical. These were heavy influences on the *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* score.

What are you aiming at for the general tone of the game?

After playing *DX1*, and looking at the story and art direction for *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*, I definitely wanted to create a more organic and emotional tone in this prequel. Because the story takes place 25 years before the original, the technology is quite rough, the art direction is much more organic and warm, so the music had to take on these characteristics. It's still a very electronic score, but there's also a very acoustic and emotional element to the music.

Should players expect a great deal of variation from area to area in terms of the music they hear and the styles it incorporates?

Definitely. There are quite a few locations in the game that take the player across multiple continents, and multiple visual styles – poor, wealthy, American, Asian, light, dark and so on. The score travels from minimal ambient cues, large breakbeat-driven combat cues, to ethnic-toned themes in the more exotic environments, as well as larger orchestral-style themes (the music in the trailers for example), to even the tracks heard in nightclubs. There is a lot of music in the game – and it covers

a wide range of styles – but it all stems from a consistent mood – a specific tone that tells a story throughout the game.

Should we keep an ear out for any interesting additions to the

The art direction is organic and warm, so the music had to take on these characteristics

soundtrack in terms of instruments you've utilised?

One aspect of the score that was very important to me was the use of vocals. There are over 100 different voices throughout the game – in quite a few different languages and from many different parts of the world. Sometimes the vocals are hidden in the background, as part of a dark wall of ambient, and sometimes they are way up front. I also tried to develop a sound design concept in the music, where some of the elements of an ambient or combat cue would include hints of music you might hear while walking through a street. For example a street musician in China, or an old blues track coming from a distant bar in Detroit. These sound design elements are very subtle, but I think when combined with the score it helps all the music feel much more immersive – as if it's alive in that environment.



⚙️ With over 100 voices featured in the game, *Human Revolution* promises to be an immersive experience.

word on the tweet



TimOfLegend
"Free insult I just made up: 'You put the 'pudge' in 'pajamas.' Better if said out loud. Try it on someone you love!"

Double Fine's Tim Schafer
once again proves a handy source for smart new putdowns.

How F.E.A.R. will scare you

It's all about the sounds you hear and the ammo in your clip, says Day 1 Studios



Getting the frights right is down to fine balance of sound effects, setting and gunplay according to Day 1 Studios systems designer Ben Cureton, but the most important thing is to put the game in front of people and make sure it genuinely terrifies them. Speaking exclusively to **PLAY** about the upcoming *F.E.A.R. 3*, Cureton revealed a little of the philosophy behind this new sequel ahead of its release in May.

"Atmosphere and environment are critical to the experience and *F.E.A.R. 3* will have some interesting environments

that will keep players guessing on what is going to happen next," Cureton told us. "Sound design really sets the mood and a great deal of effort has been invested to ensure the aural experience is dynamic and keeps players on their toes. On top of that, the gunplay has a completely separate degree of tension. When ammo is hard to find and you're faced with some overwhelming odds, facing that challenge can be suspenseful in itself."

This combination has been the secret to *F.E.A.R.*'s success. The final test, though, is always putting it in front

of them and making sure the balance is working. "Focus tests are integral to developing a well-rounded paranormal and frenetic combat experience. We don't just record playthroughs. We set up a video camera and mic so we can catch players' reactions. It's easy to get too close to a game during development so we've made it a point to bring in fresh sets of eyes to help us evaluate the game."

The gastric functions of gamers may never be safe again.

STAT ATTACK
72%
players finished *Heavy Rain*

WIN The Walking Dead and Dead Rising 2

Copies of the new DVD and undead adventure up for grabs



Zombie fever has been spreading across the world and more importantly across the entertainment industry. Now Entertainment One is releasing the complete first season of *The Walking Dead* and we have three copies to give away along with three copies of Capcom's own undead saga *Dead Rising 2*. All you have to do to be in with a chance of winning is answer the following question...

To kill a zombie you must remove the head or destroy what?

- The brain
- The shin
- The zombie's sense of self worth

To submit your answer email play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject heading 'Walking Dead Comp' or write to us at Walking Dead Comp, Play, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, BH2 6EZ. Please include your full name, age and address. The closing date for entries is **8 June 2011**. You must be 18 or older to enter this competition. *The Walking Dead: The Complete First Season* is released on Blu-ray and DVD 16 May courtesy of Entertainment One

TERMS AND CONDITIONS All entrants must be 18 years old or over. To submit your answer, simply email play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject line 'Walking Dead Comp'. The closing date for entries is 8 June 2011. Please be aware that answers must be submitted to the above email address only, and any left through the comments section of our website will be automatically disqualified. This competition is open to residents of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Imagine Publishing has the right to substitute the prize for a similar item of equal or higher value. Employees of Imagine Publishing (including freelancers), their relatives, or any agents are not eligible to enter. The editor's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into. Prizes cannot be exchanged for cash. Full terms and conditions are available upon request. From time to time, Imagine Publishing or its agents may send you related material or special offers. If you do not want to receive this, please state it clearly on your competition entry.

Charts

Cataloguing everything that's big in the world of PlayStation

PS3 CHART

1		FIFA 11 EA The buzz around <i>FIFA 12</i> could have helped last year's footy wonder climb the chart again. 91%
2		Call Of Duty: Black Ops Activision We're starting to see a fair few deals for <i>Black Ops</i> now after six months of it being on sale. 94%
3		Portal 2 Valve It's amazing that a game from such humble beginnings could climb so high up these charts. 95%
4		Killzone 3 Sony <i>Killzone 3</i> doesn't seem to have the same longevity as its FPS competitors. 80%
5		Mortal Kombat Warner Bros. Not the greatest fighting game ever, but a pretty good social game and a great <i>Mortal Kombat</i> . 81%
6		SOCOM: Special Forces Sony We were disappointed with <i>SOCOM</i> and would have liked something more substantial. 63%
7		Homefront THQ <i>Homefront</i> is still hanging in there, but likely to drop a few more places next month. 69%
8		LittleBigPlanet 2 Sony Now with over 4 million levels, <i>LBP</i> is a force to be reckoned with. Expect this one to stick around. 96%
9		Crysis 2 EA Mixed word of mouth has seen some flock towards <i>Crysis</i> and others run away. 72%
10		Dragon Age II EA Probably not much longer for these charts it will be a shame to see <i>Dragon Age</i> fall away. 86%

PSP CHART

1		Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy Square Enix Still holding firm and continuing to prove that Square Enix is the premier PSP publisher in the world. 79%
2		FIFA 11 EA EA is excited to be moving on to the NGP, but this is a solid performance for the <i>FIFA</i> series. 69%
3		WWE All Stars THQ <i>All Stars</i> is fun and simple while capturing the things we love most about wrestling. NA%
4		Final Fantasy IV: Complete Collection Square Enix Even more Square love on PSP and this for a game that's been around for 20 years. 80%
5		The 3rd Birthday Square Enix Another superb portable game from Square Enix, the current masters of the PSP. 80%

*This chart is compiled from sales, our opinions and the games you're playing. If you're playing a recent, quality title that isn't on our chart, head on over to the forum and let us know about it.



THE FANBOY
He only does PlayStation

ARTISTIC ENDEAVOURS

Sony shows its softer side... awwwww

First, a caveat. As you know, I'm all about the violent, shooty-shooty titles, even if most are just blatant... homages... of *Call Of Duty*. PlayStation supports balls to the wall gaming like no other console. The superior hardware is just able to render

PS3 SUPPORTS BALLS TO THE WALL GAMING

explosions and arterial spray patterns far more realistically than anything the Xbox 360 can chug out of its creaky architecture.

But Sony does something else far better than the 360, and that's diversity. An obvious example is *Flower*. I imagine Microsoft would take one look at a title in which you control the wind and blow petals around a field and dismiss it as horrible hippie

bullcrap. Well, maybe it is horrible hippie bullcrap (couldn't they have added just

one tiny explosion somewhere?), but at least Sony's willing to champion something that's living out on the edge of the games industry.

And Sony's only continuing its brave foray into new genres in the future, once again placing its well-

earned trust in thatgamecompany and Team Ico. Take *Journey*, for instance. All you do is walk. I'm not into walking, but I'm overjoyed that Sony is forward-thinking enough to create a game that allows me a little bit of escapism.

And then there's *The Last Guardian*. I can imagine the Xbots now, watching those trailers with sheer rage quaking through their bodies in the knowledge that they'll never get a chance to experience such a wonderfully and artfully crafted game. I don't know what on earth that cat thing is... in fact it looks a bit too cutesy for me (perhaps Fumito Ueda should arm it with an AK-47? Just a thought) but that's not the point. The point is that we have these games and Xbox does not.

Don't even start me on *Limbo* or *Braid*. *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time* was doing time manipulation yonks before Jonathan Blow sauntered onto the scene like he'd just pulled the idea out of his arse. And *Limbo*? Erm, you forgot to put graphics in your game. Where's all the colour?

No, it's Sony that's always been at the forefront of the art game. It's Sony that's willing to give these titles a chance. And even though neither *Journey* nor *The Last Guardian* are

ever going to compete with the next *Call Of Duty* in terms of sales, their very existence is a great sign for the future of not just Sony, but its impact on gaming as an entire medium. Sony saves the world once again.

LIKING

That indie game *Machinarium* is coming to PS3. This is sweet enough, but it only gets sweeter when you hear what its creator, Jakob Dvorsky, said about Microsoft: 'We were refused by Microsoft to bring the game to Xbox.' He told *CasualGaming.biz*. 'We're not interested in Microsoft any more.' Too right, Jakob.

HATING

Developer layoffs. The news that THQ has laid off 30 devs at Kaos Studios and Volition is disappointing. Sometimes it's a necessary evil, and it's something we'll see time and again, but it's never good to learn those people that make the PS3 so great aren't as safe and secure as we'd like.

DISCLAIMER: The Fanboy is a PS3 enthusiast, but his views may never represent those of Play or its affiliates.





The best interview ever... or not

Jason Leigh, *Dead Rising 2: Off The Record*'s executive producer, shows why being a videogames journalist can sometimes be rather testing

Will Chuck return in *Dead Rising 2: Off The Record*?

I can't give you any details about Chuck's involvement at this point but Chuck will be in the game. He'll certainly be in the game in co-op.

Does the co-op system work differently if you are playing as a different character?

Details of how that works, we can't talk about yet. But we've fully considered that they are two different characters.

Will there be an Epilogue or Prologue for *Off The Record*?

At this point there are no plans for a prologue or epilogue for this game.

Will you re-balance the weapon system?

Details on exact improvements at this point, we're not really rolling those out.

Can you say if there are rewards for people who played *Dead Rising 2*?
No I can't. Sorry.

Is this planned as a budget release or full-price release?

The official word is this will be appropriately priced.

Can you talk about the new area?

I was hoping someone would ask that. No, I can't. I said there was going to be a new mode... any questions?

Will you answer any questions about the new mode?

No [laughs].

Is it like *Endless mode*?

Sorry. Can't say.

EXCLUSIVE PARTY

Entry by invite only

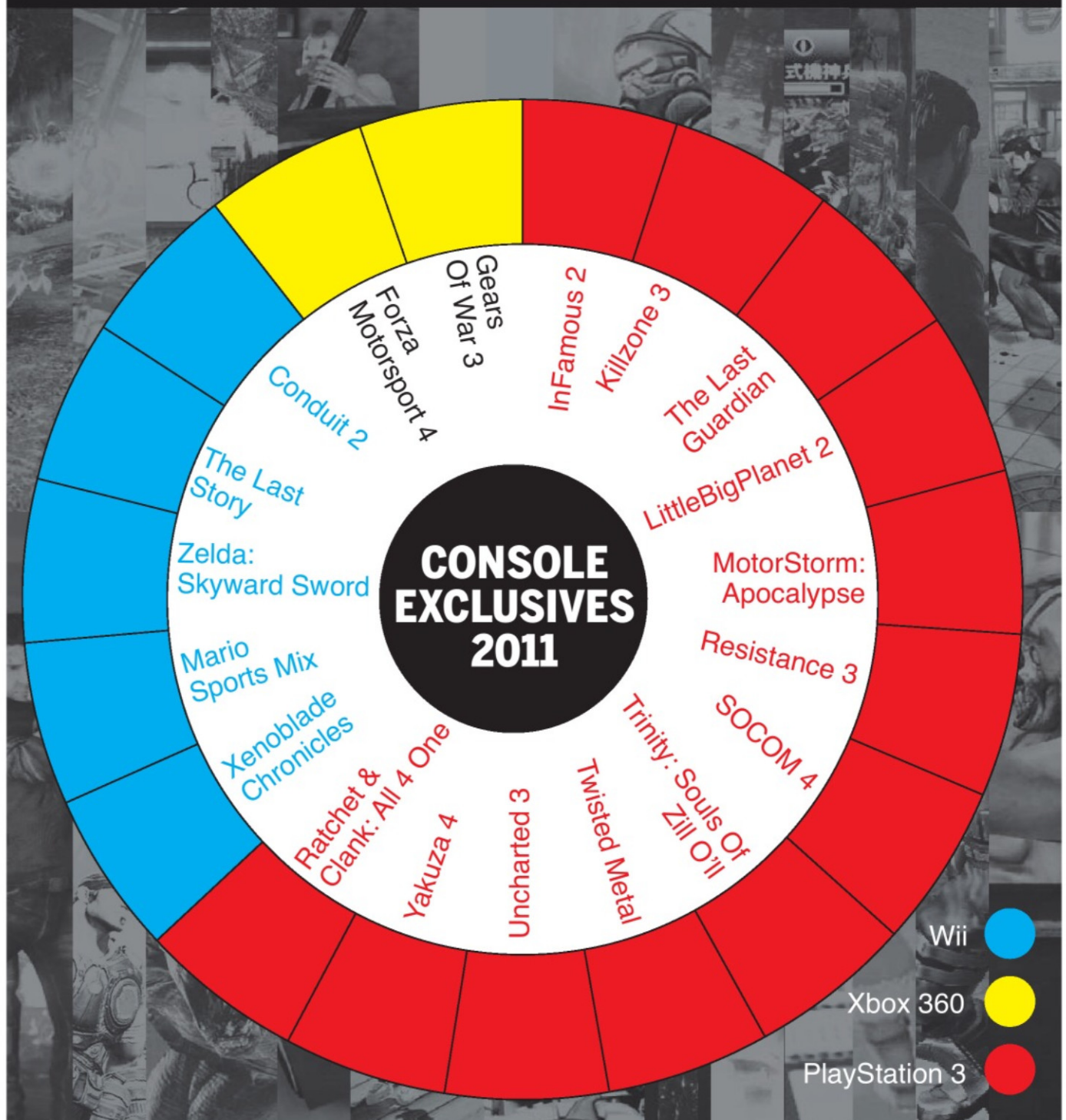
This is why it's good to be a PlayStation owner

THIS MONTH, WHILE working hard and putting together this magazine for your reading pleasure, we made an incredibly satisfying discovery that put a big smile on our overworked little faces. We've demonstrated this discovery quite capably on the diagram you see below. All you need is take a quick

glance to see just why PlayStation is and always will be the greatest console.

Full retail games, no Kinect/Move/Casual games, no masters or re-releases

Oh, and the only multiplatform title currently not coming to PS3? *X-COM*. We can live with that.



INSTALL

{The Vault}

OBJECTS OF DESIRE

The toys, trinkets and tailoring that has our fires burning this month



Metal Gear Solid Anniversary Figures

£19.99 at ForbiddenPlanet.co.uk

To mark the 20th anniversary of the *Metal Gear* franchise Konami got a small collection of figures together from a range of Kojima's major releases. Here we have Vamp from *MGS 4*; one of the series' best villains. You can also find very cool figures of Naked Snake, Old Snake, Raiden and The Boss.



Star Wars Talking Plushes

£13.99 each at ForbiddenPlanet.com

As if being able to cosy up with Boba Fett wasn't enough, you can also have a conversation with him if you get this new plush toy. You may also need to be crazy. Unfortunately being crazy is sold separately, but we understand some of the supermarkets are doing two for one offers on insanity right now.



Vogel's TwistDock

£49.95 at Amazon.co.uk

Keeping your PS3 tidy while also displaying it smartly and offering some neat recharging ports for your controllers, this TwistDock for the slim PS3 is actually a pretty good idea. It should keep all your goods in order and doesn't leave a mess of cables all around your room. Basically a nice piece of kit to have around.



Portal 2 Shirts

\$19.99 each at Store. ValveSoftware.com

Want to tell the world about your love for *Portal 2* and your close co-op relationship with your best bud? Then these shirts could be the way to go. We like that you can pretty much buy one each and then walk around high-fiving each other all day, therefore paying tribute to Valve's latest.



Mega Man Model Kits

£21.99 each at ForbiddenPlanet.com

We don't see many cool model kits these days. We used to love building stuff when we were knee high to a Gundam. Now, these *Mega Man* kits are particularly cool, because you're basically creating an action figure for yourself and that's excellent. More of these types of things please, world.



Pirate Service Announcement

£21.84 at MySoti.com

Piracy is bad and we don't condone it. We do condone T-shirts about it, though, so here's an excellent one with lots of pirated materials all over it.



The Weight Of The World

£19.25 at MySoti.com

Bring together a small blue elephant and a giant, pixelated, pink sphere and you've more or less won us over. We're a simple bunch and we're easily amused.

CONDITIONS: Enter discount code when placing order. MySoti.com discount code only valid on featured items between 12 May and 8 June. Visit MySoti.com for even more great T-shirts.



Space Invaders Hoodie

\$29.99 at ThinkGeek.com

Tasteful game apparel can sometimes be tricky to find, but as you can see on these pages we know where to look. Our latest discovery was this excellent hoodie from ThinkGeek.com. We particularly like the zipper detail that has you pull on the cannon from the game. That's nicely done.

Turtle Beach Ear Force PX5

£199.99 RRP

If you've spent any time at all looking around for a good quality headset for your games then you've come across some of Turtle Beach's products. These guys really lead the field and the multifunction-compatible PX5 model looks to be at the top of its class. It's all about great sound quality and exceptional comfort.



Dragon Age II Pendants

£10.99 each at ForbiddenPlanet.com

BioWare and EA aren't skimping on the *Dragon Age* material these days and you can find all sorts of weird and wonderful bits and pieces around, but we really like these pendants. Each represents a different group; The Chantry, Templars, City Of Kirkwall or The House Of Tides.



Bandai Mugen Chocolate

¥1,500 at GeekStuff4U.com

For one reason or another Japan has an obsession with keyrings that allow you to simulate the experience of popping or breaking everyday objects. We've seen ring pulls and bubble wrap and now thanks to Bandai you can experience the joys of cracking chocolate bars without having the chocolate. Pointless? Possibly.

Ryan Industries Shirt

£20 at InsertCoinClothing.com

A man chooses, a slave obeys. So, we're not going to demand that you buy this shirt because that wouldn't be in the spirit of Ryan Industries or the principles upon which Rapture was founded. Instead we'll simply ask, would you kindly give this shirt your consideration? Cheers.

Afterlife Shirt

£18 at InsertCoinClothing.com

When it comes to hives of scum and villainy this side of the *Star Wars* universe, you need look no further than Omega's premier hotspot and de facto office of its matriarchal leader Aria T'Loak. This is where the lawless space station finds some semblance of order and where the alien chicks dance provocatively.

HIGH FIVE

We run down the best videogame comic mini-series

Assassin's Creed: The Fall

WildStorm

This spin-off from the main game story follows a Russian assassin named Nikolai Orelov being viewed by his descendant Daniel Cross. The book spends most of its time in late 19th and early 20th Century St Petersburg.



Mass Effect: Evolution

Dark Horse

This four-issue series finished up last month and filled in some of the back story for your shady benefactor in *Mass Effect 2*, the Illusive Man. It also gave us some background on the First Contact War and the Spectre traitor Saren.



Deus Ex: Human Revolution

DC Comics

Rather than attempting to dodge the issue of stepping on the game's toes, this *Deus Ex* comic throws you right into the mix with lead character Adam Jensen already fighting the dark forces he'll face in the game this August.



inFamous

DC Comics

Since he's already a superhero and Sucker Punch has already attempted to tell some of his story in comic form, it's no surprise that Cole MacGrath got himself a fully fledged comic series. It's not bad either.



DC Universe Online Legends

DC Comics

Set within the world of the MMO rather than the main comic arcs, this DC crossover can concentrate on just building up the events of the game itself. Expect some stories to cut from comic to game as the MMO expands.



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Podcast

The Play team talks about games every month
www.play-mag.co.uk/category/podcasts

Go to www.Play-Mag.co.uk for daily updates and features

Reload

The very best of the Play Blog this month

Grand Theft Auto: The Movie – do we really want it?



TRANSMEDIA IS ALL the rage these days – it's very rare that a new game isn't released alongside a comic book, mini-series or novel. But Rockstar is one dev that's refused to allow its franchises to be exploited in movies, television or comic books. Talking to the *Hollywood Reporter*, Rockstar co-founder Dan Houser clearly laid out the reasons for this, saying, "Virtually all movies made from games are awful, while many games made from movies are also pretty horrible."

"If you feel the property has something about it that is universal or could work in another medium, and it is not simply about making easy money, then that is something worthwhile," he said. "Too often, however, the aim appears to be to cash-in on the success of a particular game, book, pop singer, website, etc, and that usually produces mediocre results."

"If we were to attempt to make a movie, we would like to make it ourselves," said Houser. "Or at least work in collaboration with the best talent, so at least if it is bad, we can know we failed on our own terms."

Apparently there's been talk of *L.A. Noire* being turned into a film, which, to me, seems pointless, as I believe to be the case with all of Rockstar's franchises. *Grand Theft Auto*, *Red Dead Redemption*, *L.A. Noire*, *Manhunt* – I don't see the need for them to appear on the big screen. One Rockstar franchise has made that leap – *Max Payne* – and we all know how that turned out. I clawed my eyes out in a fit of agonising desperation after watching it. Rockstar must have felt somewhat the same, seeing their creation totally misinterpreted and misunderstood in such a careless manner. It's probably the exact reason that Houser makes comments like those above.

But it's not just because film versions of videogames are predominantly bad that I believe Rockstar's work should be left well alone. It's because these are cinematic, worthwhile pieces of entertainment in their own right. Any attempt to extend them beyond videogames seems, to me, to

work against that which Rockstar Games is hoping to achieve.

But first, let's not dismiss the fact that most of the Rockstar games I've listed already owe a great debt to cinema. *GTA* references everything from Scorsese to De Palma; *Red Dead* echoes pretty much every Western ever made; and *L.A. Noire* – while no imitation of films like *L.A. Confidential* is still inspired by them. To then put these films on the silver screen would therefore create an awkward feedback loop. Films recalling videogames recalling films – it could feel like a photocopy losing definition and focus with every copy made.

But that could be avoided with careful and intuitive filmmaking. These games have enough character to call their own and the right person could use that to craft something worthy of cinema. But still, even then I wouldn't be convinced, and it's because Rockstar has a very defined place in the videogame industry. Its aspirations to merge the artful and the cinematic with the interactive is a valuable and significant enough pursuit. Nearly every major project the company has worked on over the last decade has been geared towards this goal – whether it's the car chases and characterisation of *GTA*; the panoramic vistas of *Red Dead*; or the MotionScan tech in *L.A. Noire*, Rockstar is working towards a kind of videogame that doesn't need to be turned into cinema; it wants to create one that can stand alongside it.

I don't need to see Niko Bellic projected onto the big screen or some actor doing his best John Marston imitation and failing. I already have those characters, in their perfect incarnation, in the games themselves. If Rockstar should be concentrating on anything it should be in further developing its craft as a videogame developer, because if any one company has the potential to elevate games to a medium as worthy of praise as the bests of cinema, it's Rockstar.

@PLAY
MAGRYAN

Watching Chris and Ian playing *Portal 2* co-op is like watching kids in front of the TV. So quiet!

STAT ATTACK
4 million

LittleBigPlanet levels created and shared

<http://bit.ly/fPgGGR>

5 things we expect from new Burnout. If it's real

BURNOUT CRASH, EH? It's not even official yet, so if it ends up not being real or having its name changed we could look quite the fools for talking about it.

Still, it's an excuse to write a list of DEFINITE THINGS we will DEFINITELY SEE in the game. If it exists. Which it probably does, let's be honest. GO LIST GO:

1 CRASHING

We'll go out on a limb here and make this bold, life-changing claim: *Burnout Crash* will feature crashing. It might be of the game itself thanks to some unforeseen bugs – though we doubt it – but it should also definitely feature the kind of crashing where cars go BOOM and stuff.

2 CARS

A bold prediction here, offered up by none other than 'Renegade' Ian Dransfield: *Burnout Crash* will feature cars. Not just any old cars, but cars that race. There's a

reason 'Maverick' Ian Dransfield is referred to as 'Dynamo' – it's because of predictions like these.

3 MORE CRASHING

What's more fun than crashing? MORE CRASHING.

4 MUSIC

We're not quite confident enough in our psychic abilities to predict the exact genres of music that will be on show in *Crash*. Though it is almost nailed-on that Bad Religion will be involved. And if they're not, we're just going to play it while listening to them. So there.

5 ACHIEVED WITH CRYENGINE 3

Because it definitely makes games about 300 times better when you put this kind of phrasing on one of the introductory logos. Definitely not twatty at all, oh no siree.

There's probably an 80% correct-strike rate there. We're so damn good at predictions.

@PLAY MAGIAN
Been off the exercise this week. At the same time, been lugging a fat PS3 to and from work this week. I expect to have lost 15lbs by Friday.

@PLAY MAGCHRIS
Glad no one walked into the games room while I was dancing to Thriller on Michael Jackson: The Experience.



@PLAY MAGJON

And now for some #henpuns in honour of our new fav mag Practical Poultry – A Few Good Hen

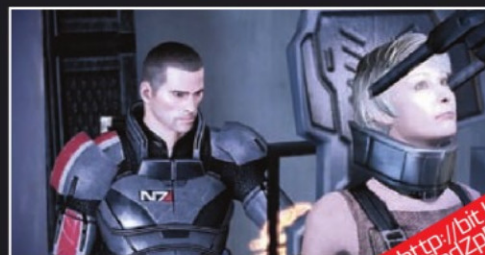
Clearly I'm a Mass Effect fanboy

THE FIRST STEP is to admit you have a problem. As the very first reviews of *Mass Effect 2: Arrival* have begun to drop on the web I have been forced to make a startling confession. I am a *Mass Effect* fanboy. Despite the new hole some seem to be ripping BioWare over the latest and last DLC for *Mass Effect 2* I still fully intend to buy it tonight and play it with each of my different playthroughs.

Now, I may still play it and wonder what the hell I was thinking, but the most likely outcome of my playing *Arrival* tonight is that I get a bit of a cold sweat and a tingle up my spine as the mission closes. I don't care how much it costs. I don't care if it introduces no new gameplay ideas. I don't care if the only thing it has to offer is story. It gives me the fix I need, even if it isn't a full strength dose.

And so I'm forced to accept that I'm a *Mass Effect* fanboy. I just love being in that world, throwing guards and bots around like leaves in a stiff breeze and generally showing the Reapers that humanity is tougher than they think. I just want to be there.

But once I'm done I should seek some kind of help to clean myself up before the release of *ME3*... maybe I'll start playing *Dragon Age II*.



<http://bit.ly/fndzpd>

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www.facebook.com/PlayMagazineUK



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WINNING!



They would have won more than a bar of chocolate if Carl and Dan had been there.

PLAY DISCUSSION

Chris – "I think it would be a good idea to open a tattoo removal parlour. I think there'll be money in it."

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CHRIS'S KING OF POP IMPERSONATION



FICTIONAL SPORTS

The best fake sports to feature in videogames, according to us



Quidditch [Harry Potter]

Let's get facts straight. The last EA rugby game to enter the scene was back in 2008. The last game to feature Quidditch, however, was 2009's *Half-Blood Prince*, proving forever more that the stupid (and by stupid we mean awesome, naturally) sport from *Harry Potter* is now more popular than men chasing eggs. And what's not to love? As players fly around on broomsticks they try to get a ball in a giant hole. A giant hole! They can even carry their trusty wand in a back pocket... even though they're not allowed to use it. Makes perfect sense, especially to **Play's** own Chris McMahon, who wakes from his day-long semi-slumber just hearing the sport's name.

● Blitzball has even more drama than your average *Final Fantasy* experience.



Frolf [Ribbit King]

'Frogs don't play golf!' No, you're right, but every now and then they will happily sit in for the part of the ball listening to the advice of a picnic basket and alien panda. If we didn't have a word count to fill we'd draw the line right there. Clearly frolf is the true sport of kings. For you see, while Tiger Woods – who isn't even a tiger, by the way – and Lee Westwood merely hit things with clubs, frolf asks you to whack catapults to hurl the amphibious animals skyward. On top of this, the victor gets a fuel source needed so their planet doesn't die. Green jacket our ass...

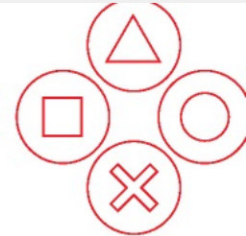


Blitzball [Final Fantasy X]

Although many people pretend to, no one actually likes rugby. Or maybe it's that no one understands it? They just act as if they do because deep down they're utterly depressed that neither is set in a lake, ocean or custom-made tank. Sure, these saddened individuals have tried underwater rugby (and, believe it or not, it really does exist) but usually that just makes

everything worse. Enter *Final Fantasy's* blitzball. Boasting six-on-six action that gives two teams the opportunity to try to kick a 'blitzball' into the 'goal', the winner of the match is whoever has scored the most 'points' when 'time' has run out. You can't buy that kind of drama, and this is coming from *Final Fantasy X*, where your dad was a fish, or something. It must be good.





Spheda [Dark Chronicles]

You may not know this – and we don't blame you – but *Dark Chronicles* is the greatest JRPG ever made. Seriously. Rather than follow a moody teenager who's upset he's not having sex, even though there's no way he should be fornicating at his age, every dungeon you entered transformed into a spheda course on completion. Asking that you repair time distortions in the atmosphere using a spheda club, you have to hit balls, that change colour every time they collide with an object, into these warps making sure they're the right shade. Better than this, it's not like any sport ever created in the real world, especially golf.

● We've NEVER seen any sport like it before.



● Wipeout is what Formula 1 will be in 50 years. Hopefully.

Wipeout [Wipeout]

To be a Formula 1 driver, eh? Sitting on concrete in a grounded vehicle doesn't impress us, and nor should it – not when we've been shown the world of *Wipeout*. For goodness sake, check that 'E'; if nothing else. It's giving no respect to the sanctity of grammar. That takes some moxy. It stands to reason it's the better sport, too. After all, what would you rather do? Drive a fast car around Silverstone, or take to the skies, get in an anti-gravity rocket, hit power pads for speed boosts and shoot missiles at other people on the grid? If you picked the former you're really boring. Or just a massive liar. While you're looking at Monza remember we're now checking out a futuristic Canada. Winner!

Struggle [Kingdom Hearts]

The bat isn't used as a weapon enough for our liking. We long for the day someone holds up a bank with one, say, or tries to take over a country. *Kingdom Hearts* gets our drift. The sport of struggle – regardless of all the rules Square tried to put on it – at its heart asks two competitors to wield bats and hit each other with them. Sure, there's an orb system which relates to your score and a time limit to observe, but as soon as that weapon is in your grasp, it's time to smash the shit out of someone with it. Not bad for a game that features Mickey Mouse, Pluto and Goofy. We'd love to smack Goofy...



● It doesn't get much better than smashing up Disney characters.

CONCLUSION

Everyday sports may be popular, but fictional versions are better. Many are imaginary for a reason, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't highlight how good they are. Furthermore, they've allowed many games to find a degree of diversity and become twice the entity they would've been... other than *Harry Potter*. They're terrible. And for losers. Like Chris McMahon. Still, fictional sports, **Play** loves you!

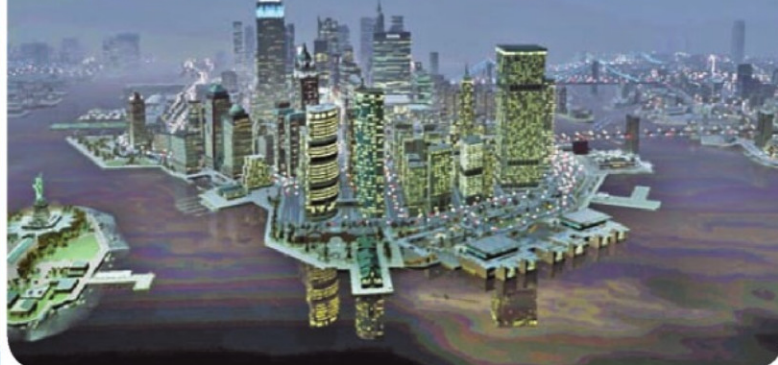
5 THINGS WE WANT TO SEE FROM GTA V

Right now we know as much about GTA V as you. However, we do know what we *want* to see from it...



1 A DISTINCT SETTING

Liberty City is one of the greatest videogame worlds of all time, so we expect something special from the sequel. Will Rockstar return to another city? Or could it head back to San Andreas. We'd like to see it set in a different time period, à la *Vice City* – the Seventies is ripe for material when it comes to cinematic reference and satire.



2 MULTIPLE CHARACTERS

We saw Rockstar experiment with *Grand Theft Auto IV* and its *Episodes From Liberty City* DLC, with multiple characters' stories crossing over during the diamond heist. Imagine if in *GTA V* you played as several different individuals, experiencing the same story from both the police and the criminals' viewpoints. It could be like a videogame version of *The Wire*.

3 VARIED MISSION DESIGN

It can't be denied that *GTA IV*'s mission design felt somewhat repetitive – the same cycle of drive there, shoot that, drive somewhere else. We'd like to see a bit more imagination in the level design this time – perhaps Rockstar can introduce some new mechanics that give you more interactions within the world that aren't just limited to violence.



4 NO RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship system in *GTA IV* could have been ignored if we so wished, fair enough. But still, taking a friend out bowling felt dull and tiresome. Hopefully in *GTA V* Rockstar finds new ways to play with the core setup of *Grand Theft Auto* that aren't just pointless distractions.

5 NEW TECHNOLOGIES

The inclusion of the Euphoria physics engine in *GTA IV* was a brilliant addition; watching Niko Bellic drunkenly stumble out of a bar being a particular highlight. The new handling models for vehicles also gave driving a tangible solidity. We'd love to see more technologies impacting on the game in this way in *GTA V*.



TEAM PICKS

The Play team picks its all-time favourite GTA games



CHRIS

GTA III

In terms of the way I felt upon first playing it, it's got to be *GTA III*. It was a genuine gaming revolution and remains one of the most important videogames ever.



JON

GTA IV

It may not be the most 'out there crazy' game in the *Grand Theft Auto* series, but I liked *GTA IV*'s characters and story a lot. It was a real step up for Rockstar and an amazing journey.



IAN

ORIGINAL GTA

From a technological perspective it was a bit pump, but there's no getting over the impact the original *GTA* had. The freedom, the potential for dicking about – stunning.



RYAN

GTA: VICE CITY

It was *GTA III* with personality, sporting a distinct look and the best soundtrack. Call me! Do do do dooby do. Caaaalll meeeeee!

The anatomy of... Commander Shepard

You may think us daft for analysing a character who is ultimately defined by the players who embody him, but there's more story and individuality to Shepard than you'll find in most RPG protagonists

KNOWN ASSOCIATES



Mordin Solus
We're sorry, but if we spent more than five minutes with someone who talked that fast and that incessantly we would be left with no choice but to kill them.



Ashley Williams
We're not sure why Shepard keeps Ashley around. If our numerous conversations with her have revealed anything it's that she's a bit of a racist.



Urdnot Wrex
Wrex probably thought he was Shepard's best buddy – all the fun they shared. Then Shepard (potentially) kills him on Virmire. How rude.



Tali'Zorah vas Neema
If we had a friend who always wore a mask, we'd be suspicious. We seduced Tali in ME2 though, and Shepard seemed happy with what he saw under the visor...



Jack
Not only would Jack's dress sense make us uncomfortable in her presence, but the fact that she's certifiably INSANE also puts us off her company.



WHO IS THIS IMPOSTOR?

The man pictured here is not our Commander Shepard. He's a pretender. He's the wrong gender for a start – our Shepard is female and has a bald head. She's focused on the mission at hand but gets easily distracted by her secret longings for any Krogan she comes across – she just can't get enough of those lumpy skulls and floppy lips. Okay, we made that last bit up, but our Shepard is still the best. The default version pictured here is based on Dutch model Mark Vanderloo. At least we know that if the Reapers attacked in real life we have someone to send after them.



CRITICAL MISSION FAILURE

Shepard went and got himself killed once, which was a bit careless. During the opening of *Mass Effect 2* the original Normandy is torn apart by a Collector ship, flinging Shepard into space. The four-issue comic series *Mass Effect: Redemption* details what happened next – the Shadow Broker, working for the Collectors, went looking for Shepard, as did Liara T'Soni. Shepard's body nearly ended up with the Collectors, but luckily Liara stopped the deal from happening and handed Shepard's body over to Cerberus. Lucky she did that; we wouldn't have a sequel to play otherwise.



SPOTLESS SERVICE RECORD

Commander Shepard is one of the most decorated humans in the galaxy. That N7 on Shepard's armour designates his position in the Systems Alliance military, the 'N' denoting special forces and the '7' referring to the fact he's achieved the highest level of proficiency. His parents must have been so proud. Even prouder when he was inducted into the Spectres – a special taskforce that answers to the Galactic Council and has absolute authority, including the power of life and death over the galaxy's inhabitants. And we thought our B in GCSE maths was good.



HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Did you give Shepard a happy childhood, or put him through a harrowing ordeal?

PRE-SERVICE HISTORY

Spacer: Both of Shepard's parents served in the Alliance military, meaning his childhood was spent on ships and space stations. How lovely.

Earth-born: Shepard grew up as a mischievous little scamp in the dangerous slums of earth. When he realised that was a bit rubbish, he enlisted in the military.

Colonist: Shepard was born on a small colony that was raided by slavers who slaughtered all his family and friends. We hate it when that happens.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE

Sole survivor: Shepard survived aresher maw attack that slaughtered his whole unit. He overcame the physical and psychological torments that would have broken most people.

War hero: Shepard almost single-handedly repelled an attack by batarians slavers on Elysium.

Ruthless: This version of Shepard sent three quarters of his unit to their death just to ensure victory, and then murdered some surrendering batarians for a giggle.





AND FINALLY...
Where hype and hyperbole are welcome

stop
please

Yoichi Wada

Informal formality

THEY SAY: Square Enix president Yoichi Wada was accused of being flippant, even disrespectful, in the wake of another Japanese earthquake. Why? Because he tweeted his surprise in an informal style of language.

WE SAY: It's strange what people jump on to tarnish the reputation of others. Formal language or not, Wada was clearly expressing shock.



Rock Ops

THEY SAY: WWE legend The Rock has voiced his interest in taking part in any movie adaptation that may pop up for *Call Of Duty: Black Ops*. If you smell what he's... saying.

WE SAY: It's an off the cuff remark, no more. Plus we can only really take The Rock seriously when he's in *Doom*.



Mensa man

THEY SAY: THQ bod Danny Bilson has called himself a 'genius' – at least when compared to other industry executives who don't actually play games. He also baulked at the notion of focus testing.

WE SAY: No idea if he's a bona-fide genius, but he is a likeable character and clearly loves his games. So well done there.

AIB: THE PLACE TO BE

PS3 passes 360 in weird, half-made-up figures race

THEY SAY: We knew it was coming and it has finally come true: the PS3 has surpassed the Xbox 360 in sales. Wait, not sales. The other one. Active install base or AIB. These figures were released by the firm Strategy Analytics and show the PS3 as having an install base of 43.4 million compared to the 360's 42.9 million. Even though the 360 is still outselling Sony's machine. Yes, it's a whole new world of confusion to get involved with as a new measurement of success enters the fray.

WE SAY: This whole AIB thing is what confuses us the most. It seems to be guesses mixed with a little logic and a hefty sprinkling of voodoo to come up with the numbers, and there's little we can do to prove or disprove Strategy Analytics' claims. Normally we'd be jumping for joy at hearing the willy-waving news and would probably run an eight-page feature on why PS3 is the bestest thing ever. But when it's a PS3 'victory' with so many caveats and reliance on what is – as far as we're aware – based on educated guesswork, it's harder to break out the confetti.

WARNING!
We have no idea what an active install base is either

word on the tweet



TheKevinButler
"Just got a call from HR. Apparently last week's random drug testing found I have abnormally high amounts of hilarity. Busted."

VP of whatever you want, Kevin Butler makes with some more funnies.

HACKTACULAR

Hackers declare war on Sony; civilian casualties reported

THEY SAY: Internet 'hacktivist' group Anonymous declared war on Sony following the company's legal action against hackers GeoHot and Graf_Chokolo. Initially starting as DDOS attacks on PlayStation.com and PSN, word soon changed to the possibility of personal campaigns against Sony execs. The DDOS attacks slowed and shut off PlayStation.com access for users, as well as stopping PS3 owners logging on to PSN. Sony first claimed 'maintenance' before accepting that maybe hacking had been involved.

WE SAY: There are arguments for and against Anonymous and its actions. But the hacker entity spectacularly missed the actual target in attacking a system used by PS3 users in the shape of PSN. This has, unsurprisingly, alienated many gamers from Anonymous's cause and harmed the reputation of the hacktivists in the public eye. The group stopped the attacks affecting innocent users, fair enough, but it is worrying to think what they might do next in this 'war'.



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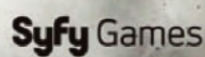
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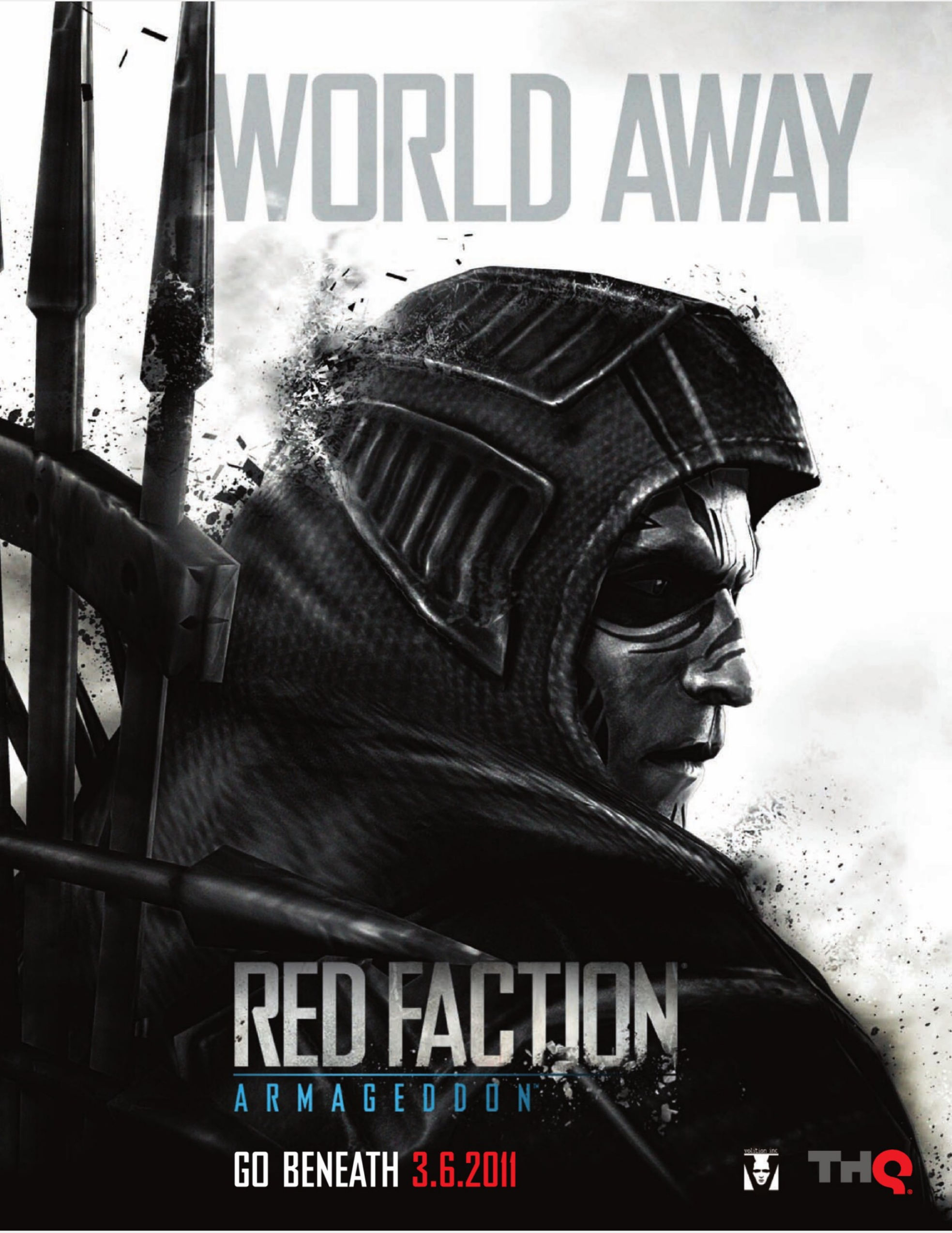
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WORLD AWAY

RED FACTION

ARMAGEDDON

GO BENEATH **3.6.2011**

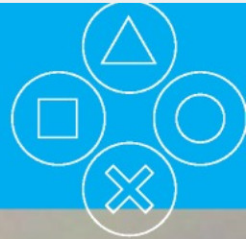




Home Truths

WITH OUR EXCLUSIVE BEHIND THE SCENES ACCESS, WE ANSWER ALL YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT HOME

Sony's wonder emporium of social interactivity has had a hard time over the two-plus years it has been active. **Play** gets an exclusive look behind the scenes of what exactly makes PlayStation Home an addition to Sony's platform worth shouting about. Ever wondered what exactly makes Home tick? Where all those fashionable threads are made? Whose mind designs those funky Spaces? We talk to the guys behind your avatar's flashy clothes, those intricate Spaces and the director of Home himself, Jack Buser. >





How did Home get started?

PlayStation Home's original design wasn't the bottomless hub of dancing dunderheads and social hobnobbing that it stands for today.

Its inception stretches back beyond the PlayStation 3 and onto the PlayStation 2, when it was initially conceived as an online lobby for the cockney backwash *The Getaway: Black Monday*, released in 2004.

Realising the somewhat limited capabilities of the PlayStation 2 online, development started focusing on the PlayStation 3 instead, moving code to the new platform and working under the name 'Hub'.

It would be a plaza where friends could chat, launch games together, play pool and take others back to their pad to show off their Trophy

collection (known as 'Entitlements' back in those dark days). Originally slated for release in October 2007, after much expansion and a name change (as a play on 'Homepage'), Home launched in open beta in December 2008.

In the following year, Sony was developing a PSP spin-off entitled Room. Basically a Diet Home, it would allow PSP owners to meet and enjoy "real-time communication" – which we assume means dancing on the spot for an hour. But the project was canned in April 2010 after closed beta testing proved unsuccessful.

Now well into its second year, PlayStation Home has around 120 studios creating new content on a daily basis, including MMOs, video content, mini-games and worldwide events, for its ever-expanding user base.

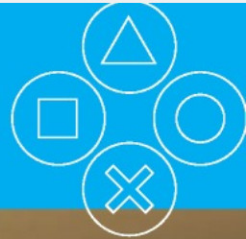


Home's original Central Plaza, now seen bustling with life.



Fact

Most successful game: Sodium
Most successful private Space: PlayStation Home Mansion



great flat you've got here
Ben!

paulr1970



How is Home content actually created?

"PlayStation Home is a genuinely unique place when it comes to consoles," Kirk Ewing, creative director at VEEMEE, enthusiastically claims. "It continues to evolve into a more and more unexpected and satisfying experience. At its core, Home is a really cool online software platform that allows third-party devs to make great games and other content."

VEEMEE has worked across a multitude of projects on Home, including designing The London Pub and some of Home's stores, but it's probably best known for its work with Audi. "It might have been confusing at first what Audi were going to do in Home but I think anyone that has visited the space will know that it's really all about great games. Audi participate fully in the design and planning for Home; we have a meeting with them every week to discuss how things have gone and what's coming up next."

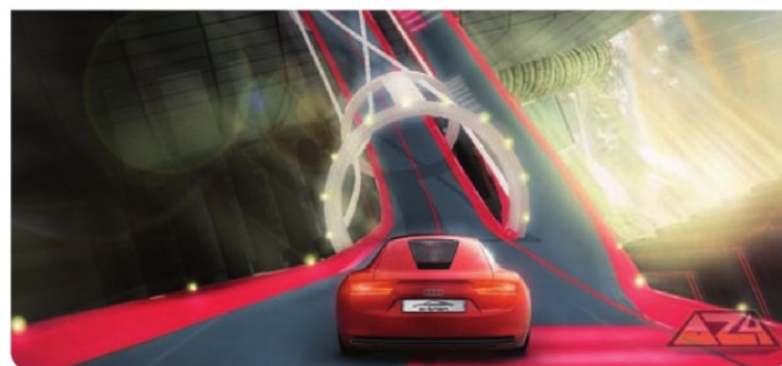
The Audi Space has allowed VEEMEE to produce exclusive games, video content and clothing for the car manufacturer's presence. "Over the last year we've released five original titles in the space including *Vertical Run* – the e-Tron-inspired racing game – an *Iron Man 2* flying game and, most recently, the *S1 Sledge* – alpine downhill racing with added Yeti action! All of them are free to play."

"When we start building a Space we try to think about not just what we'll put in it at the start," Kirk continues, "but how it will develop over time. A new Space is just the beginning and we try to keep updating and innovating and give people a reason to revisit over and over again. A great Space, in my opinion, tries to build its own complete ecosystem and lets people interact with everything they think they should be able to. I'm not a huge fan of objects that are just there for dressing and look like they should do something but don't."

An oft-overlooked aspect of PlayStation Home is the unique games that the platform has to offer and VEEMEE has been at the forefront of designing innovative interactive experiences. "Making a game for Home is basically the same as making one for any platform; idea, planning, prototype, production, test, release," Kirk explains.

"The difference with Home is all about the fact that the world is more alive than many others. Instead of thinking about how one player might interact, you've got to remember that lots of people will be playing at the same time and want to know how they compare against each other. It's also important to think about how the game interacts with Home in the bigger picture, what rewards you can give and how people might use them. Overall, I think the best games in Home are the ones that use the platform itself to best advantage."

Developed by VEEMEE for Audi's Space, *Vertical Run* is free to play over PlayStation Home.



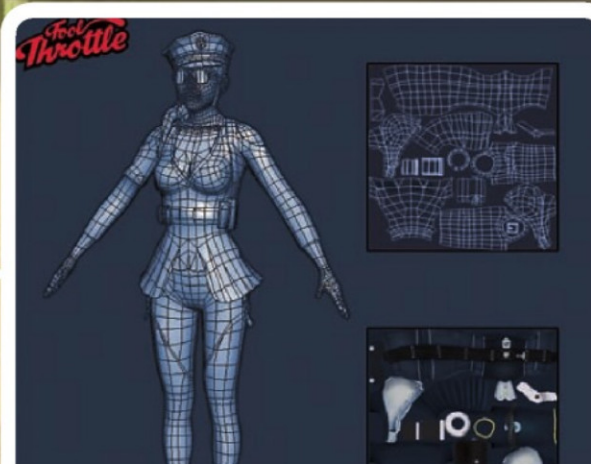


Who creates Home's clothes?

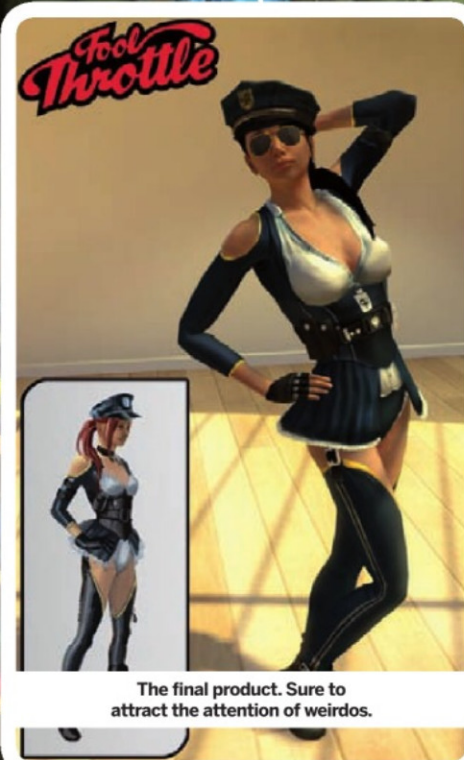
"You need to remember that what you're creating is, in many ways, an illusion," explains Megan Eggesden, retail manager at Outso – the company responsible for many of the clothing, accessories and games found in PlayStation Home. Talking exclusively to **Play**, Megan tells us exactly how Outso creates the glamorous garments found in Sony's hub. "In some ways the processes are almost identical to real life," she declares. "It might be best to view our team in terms of the wardrobe or costume department for a theatre, TV show or a movie. In High Fashion, when you talk about seasonal content you'll be talking about different collections and the latest fashion week. As a team in a games company, we'll be looking at themed content for Halloween, Valentine's or events like E3. "When it comes to creating an item, a seamstress, carpenter or designer starts off with a pattern and builds a three-dimensional version. Ironically for a 3D artist we start off with a model and then move down to a two-dimensional pattern. To explain, when we're creating

a new item we start off building a model creating a 3D mesh made of polygons which gives an overall shape to the item, this is then skinned to give a flat representation of the mesh called a UV Map. Essentially moving from a 3D model into a two-dimensional pattern to which we'll apply a texture which will give it life creating the patterns you see, including its depth and detail. It's in the conversion process, from model to pattern, that an understanding of how things are joined up or stitched together becomes really important. Joins or seams between different parts of the item are best disguised as the seams you would see in a real piece of clothing and helps make things seem that little more real."

Simple as that, but there's always problems as Megan explains: "When you create a real suit of clothes you worry about them being the right size so they'll actually fit the wearer. In a virtual world we actually have to worry about rigging and animating an outfit, not to mention worrying about a sword scabbard disappearing through a chair as an avatar sits down."



Early design maps how the clothing fits on the avatar.

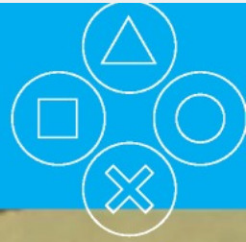


The final product. Sure to attract the attention of weirdos.

Fact

There have been more than 600 community events held.





Fact

The average time spent in the Home platform is 70 minutes per session.



Load/Save

Back **L1** **R1** Turn



Fact

In the US alone, there are more than 65 Spaces, 200 ready-to-play games and more than 8,000 virtual items.



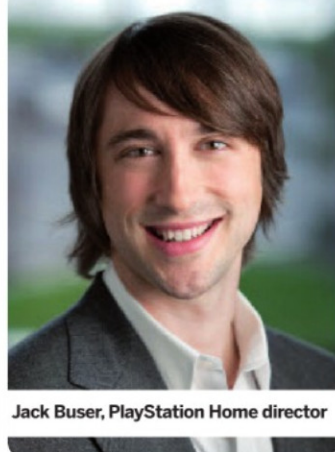
Who is the man in charge of Home?

Jack Buser, director of PlayStation Home, is the omnipotent overseer to Sony's interactive platform, as he exclusively tells **Play**. "My daily role is to oversee all aspects of PlayStation Home for North America," he tells us rather wryly. "Including product development, business, community, operations, QA, and moderation."

We catch Jack at a particularly busy time, with the recent announcement of *SodiumTwo: Project Velocity* – Outso's sequel to the massively popular MMO, *SodiumOne* – he's more than a little tied up, but happy enough to let us know what he loves about Home.

"My favourite public Space..." he responds to our question about his personal Space taste. "My favourites actually change all the time, because there is always new stuff coming in... but right now I'd say Aurora. And my favourite private Space is the Sunset Yacht."

Still, he's a gamer at heart and there's no denying his enthusiasm for all of the games packed away within Home's many Spaces. "Right now my favourite game is *Novus Prime: Escalation*," he tells us, before sneaking in one last tease. "But I've also really been enjoying *SodiumTwo: Project Velocity* behind the scenes and I can't wait to play it in the live environment with the community."

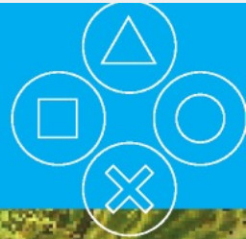


Jack Buser, PlayStation Home director



Fact

In 2008, when Home launched, there were 0.2 million users globally. In 2011, there are more than 20 million users.



Get married at... Home?

"Dearly beloved, we're gathered here today..." started the minister on 22 April 2010. A day for PlayStation Home users JE9_ID (known to many by Jenine) and Rianor5 (mostly called Michael) that will forever be etched in their memory. It was their wedding day. The venue: the temple inside the *Uncharted 2* Space on Home. "Around 20 friends attended, and the person who married us was a real ordained minister," Rianor5 says. "When the time came, everyone arrived at the temple and sat down on the benches. Then I took my spot at the head of the altar. My soon-to-be Home wife started coming up the stairs into the temple... then all of a sudden we had a bystander come into the temple, who stood between me and the minister and started making rude 'objections.' Honestly, as if there wasn't enough to worry about with the weather. Yet, this picture-perfect pixel day wasn't interrupted for long. "It didn't take long for everyone to learn to just ignore him and let the wedding continue," Rianor5 continues. "The minister didn't miss a beat with the ceremony. My future Home wife and I repeated the vows we had agreed upon and then the wedding concluded with the minister saying, 'You may kiss the bride.' At that moment, I go into my **PS** emote menu and I select to blow a kiss."

But, as everyone knows, a wedding is nothing without a raucous reception and it was no different for Home's happy couple. "We held a reception inside a clubhouse," Rianor5 enthuses. "We celebrated with our wedding guests for some time. But then my Home wife and I snuck off to the *Sodium* Space and hung out on top of a rock." The couple currently reside together in real-life three-dimensional bliss.



Not many people have wedding photos that look like this.



What is the future of Home?

The next few months are looking rather rosy for Sony's online meeting spot, with the recent announcement of version 1.5 at GDC indicating a clear shift in direction. The latest update is geared to deliver "high-quality games", with improved physics, realistic graphics and animations. The bottom line: it should open the platform to a host of unique gaming experiences that aren't yet possible.

One such multiplayer spectacular is Outso and Lockwood Publishing's aforementioned *SodiumTwo: Project Velocity* – the follow-up to *SodiumOne*. "When we released *SodiumOne: Salt Shooter* at the end of 2009," Megan Eggesden, retail manager at Outso tells *Play*, "It was a big step for us. As 2011 progresses we're hoping to go from strength to strength with *Project Velocity*."

"The game is a change of pace from an action-packed shooting game to a futuristic racer, but with a change in business model to Freemium (allowing everyone to play for free), along with the new Lockwood Publishing virtual item lines, we fully expect our teams of artists to be kept very busy over the coming months."

Home's evolution is far from over and with version 1.5 ushering a greater focus on delivering what PlayStation 3 does best – games – then Home can finally break away from its early stigma and deliver a uniquely interactive gaming experience in 2011.

Games like *Project Velocity* should help generate even more interest in Home.



THE DEVELOPER GRAVEYARD

DEDICATED TO THE STUDIOS NO LONGER WITH US...



◆◆◆ **GRIN** ◆◆◆
1997-2009

CAUSE OF DEATH: Delayed payments

In the aftermath of GRIN's messy death, most presume the studio shut due to poor sales for its final releases, the disappointing *Bionic Commando*, *Wanted* and *Terminator Salvation*. However, GRIN issued a statement explaining "too many publishers have been delaying their payments, causing an unbearable cashflow situation." Later, it was confirmed that GRIN was working on a *Final Fantasy* spin-off known as *Fortress*, a project Square Enix has now placed in the hands of an unconfirmed studio.

LEAVES BEHIND: *Bionic Commando*, *Wanted*



**FREE RADICAL
DESIGN**
1999-2009

CAUSE OF DEATH: *Star Wars: Battlefront 3*

When Rare employees clubbed together to form Free Radical Design, they could do no wrong as its *TimeSplitters* series raced away to strong sales and critical acclaim. Its first misstep was a huge one, though, with PlayStation 3 exclusive *Haze* bombing. The studio went into administration in December 2008, with rumours swirling that it was LucasArts pulling the plug on further funding on its unannounced *Star Wars: Battlefront 3* project that signalled the end. Crytek bought Free Radical in 2009.

LEAVES BEHIND: *TimeSplitters: Future Perfect*, *Haze*



FACTOR 5
1997-2008

CAUSE OF DEATH: Unknown

Powered by some astonishing visuals and innovative use of Sony's Sixaxis, *Lair* had the necessary hype behind it yet failed to make waves commercially or critically. Factor 5's long and storied past makes it hard to guess at whether the disastrous *Lair* was to blame for the studio's closure although it's worth noting much of Factor 5's history was backed by LucasArts and Nintendo as partners. With Factor 5 moving away from them and relying on *Lair*, its failure would have been more painful for the studio.

LEAVES BEHIND: *Lair*



**BIZARRE
CREATIONS**

**BIZARRE
CREATIONS**
1994-2011

CAUSE OF DEATH: Low sales

Known for its *Project Gotham Racing* series, Activision bought the UK studio in September 2007. Bizarre then released *Blur*, a racing departure from its famed PGR series, and *James Bond: Blood Stone*, the studio's first attempt at tackling a licensed game. However, sales were poor and just three years after buying the studio, Activision announced it was looking to sell Bizarre. No buyer came forward and Bizarre Creations closed its doors.

LEAVES BEHIND: *Blur*, *James Bond: Blood Stone*



REDOCTANE

1999-2010

CAUSE OF DEATH: *Guitar Hero* decline
The creator behind the *Guitar Hero* guitars rather than the games themselves, RedOctane worked together with Harmonix to develop *Guitar Hero* back in 2005. Activision acquired RedOctane in 2006 and when Harmonix split from the publisher and moved onto *Rock Band*, RedOctane teamed up with new *Guitar Hero* developer Neversoft. Sales for the series slumped and in February last year, Activision announced that it was closing its RedOctane division.

LEAVES BEHIND: *Guitar Hero*



CLOVER STUDIO

2004-2007

CAUSE OF DEATH: Low sales

The brightest flame in this morbid developer graveyard also burnt the quickest. In just three years of existence, Clover Studio went from a port of *Viewtiful Joe* to developing the sequel and then going on to make cult classics *Okami* and *God Hand*. Unfortunately, despite raking in critical acclaim and a growing fan base, Clover's titles didn't sell well. Capcom reluctantly closed the studio, with most of the Clover Studio talent ending up at current industry darling Platinum Games.

LEAVES BEHIND: *Viewtiful Joe*, *Okami*, *God Hand*



SEGA RACING STUDIO

2005-2008

CAUSE OF DEATH: Poor *Sega Rally* sales
Drawing upon talent from all corners of the games industry, such as Rockstar and Rare, as well as enticing studio head Guy Wilday over from the *Colin McRae* series, Sega Racing Studio's mission statement was to grow into a 'multi-game studio'. However, the dream died after two games – *Sega Rally Revo* and arcade-only *Sega Rally 3*. Sega announced it was closing the studio in April 2008 with Codemasters snapping it up three weeks later.

LEAVES BEHIND: *Sega Rally Revo*



bottlerocket
entertainment

BOTTLEROCKET ENTERTAINMENT

2002-2009

CAUSE OF DEATH: Splatterhouse development issues

With its only previous title being *Mark Of Kri*, Bottlerocket Entertainment was making headlines of the wrong sort after a series of public spats with publisher Namco Bandai while working on *Splatterhouse*. Namco Bandai eventually took the project off its hands and the lack of financial support left the small studio struggling. After 'fighting to keep the doors open for... six months', studio head Jay Beard announced Bottlerocket's closure in 2009.

LEAVES BEHIND: *Mark Of Kri*, *Splatterhouse*



CAUSE OF DEATH: Warner Bros. takeover

The high development costs behind *Stranglehold*, *Unreal Tournament III* and acquiring the licence for *TNA iMPACT!* left Midway with a depleted financial war chest. It announced in 2009 that Midway received a takeover bid from Warner Bros. It was a downward spiral from there – Midway Newcastle and Midway San Diego were lost, its publishing arms in France, Germany and the UK were sold and it shut its Midway Chicago HQ. Warner Bros. now publishes *Mortal Kombat* with Southpeak owners of the *TNA* licence.

LEAVES BEHIND: *Mortal Kombat Vs DC Universe*, *TNA iMPACT!*

THE DUNGEON MASTER



PLAY TALKS TO FEARGUS URQUHART – A MAN WITH MORE EXPERIENCE THAN YOUR LEVEL 50 ROGUE

If you haven't heard of Feargus Urquhart then we're disappointed in you, reader. He was the founder of Black Isle, where he conceived of and developed *Fallout*, *Planescape: Torment* and *Icewind Dale*. When Black Isle's future became uncertain, he and others departed and set up Obsidian Entertainment, the studio responsible for *Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic II*, *Neverwinter Nights 2*, *Alpha Protocol* and *Fallout: New Vegas*. So, if there's anyone who knows their RPGs, it's Urquhart. We thought it'd be a good idea to sit down for a chat with the fellow to discuss Obsidian's current game, *Dungeon Siege III*, and also the company's past, present and future in the world of videogames.



• *Dungeon Siege III* will be more action focused than most RPGs.



IN JUNE OF this year Obsidian is set to release its seventh game in as many years, and its sixth title based on IP that is not its own. Obsidian has made something of a name for itself working on other company's properties – *Knights Of The Old Republic II: The Sith Lords*, *Neverwinter Nights 2* and *Fallout: New Vegas* all building on work previously started by BioWare and Bethesda.

But *Dungeon Siege III* is a different proposition. Yes, it's based on the popular PC series created by Chris Taylor and Gas Powered Games, but *Dungeon Siege III* feels very much like Obsidian's own project. It will be the first game released by the company to utilise its proprietary Onyx engine; it's the first time the series has made its way to consoles; and the whole experience shares far more in common with Obsidian's design philosophies than Taylor's, with more focus on character interaction, branching narratives and player choice.

"When it comes to approaching a licence and you're playing in someone else's world you have to be respectful of that," says Urquhart. "So when it came to *Dungeon Siege III* we thought, 'What is this series all about? What is the core of the world?' We could not have set it in Ehb – we could have set it in another part of the world. We could not have continued the story of the Legion. But we decided otherwise. We decided these are the core things that people will remember about *Dungeon Siege* and we want to be respectful of the fans' memories and what has come before. "But although we've continued the story of Ehb and the Legion, we'll still take players to new places and tell a new story. We're updating the

• Co-op has always been a big part of the *Dungeon Siege* series and will return here.



• This woman on the left couldn't even be bothered getting dressed for this battle.



game systems and gameplay, but we're always, always considerate of what has come before."

So, while *Dungeon Siege III* shares the setting and mythology with the games it follows, the gameplay will be of Obsidian's own making. "We want to make a fun game," says Urquhart. "That sounds stupid but in the end that's what we want

"WE'RE UPDATING THE GAME SYSTEMS AND GAMEPLAY, BUT WE'RE ALWAYS, ALWAYS CONSIDERATE OF WHAT HAS COME BEFORE" – Feargus Urquhart

– a game that's a lot of fun to play. It's not like some of the other big RPGs out there. It's more focused on the use of the controller and the minute-to-minute gameplay."

Dungeon Siege III will lean closer to the action end of the action-RPG genre, with melee attacks and combos combined with magical and area-affect spells to result in fast, direct combat. "We



THE OBLIGATORY MOVE/3D BOXOUT

So, Feargus, will *Dungeon Siege III* support either?

"In the case of motion control we talked about it, but it just wasn't something we thought we could do something compelling with. It would feel like we were just slamming it in there just to say that we could and put something on the box. It made more sense to put our time and resources into the core game functionality rather than that. As for 3D... I've played the game on 3D on the PC and it's cool, but we never really pursued it when it came to consoles. Still, it looks pretty cool on the PC."

redesigned our engine to be more focused on the action gameplay," says Urquhart. "You're rolling, you're blocking... we spent a ton of time on how we do the stances and how the upgrades affect your abilities. As the game goes on you start doing the moves without thinking."

Urquhart and his team are aware that this is the first time the *Dungeon Siege* series has come to consoles, and as such it needs to be tailored towards an audience who play everything from *Oblivion* to more casual titles like *Fable III*. Options like drop-in-drop-out co-op are sure to be popular, as will the lack of load screens. Everyone who played *Fallout 3* spent a lot of time staring at a loading symbol as they moved from environment to environment, but this won't be the case in *Dungeon Siege III*. "We looked at the old *Dungeon Sieges* and there wasn't a load of cut-scenes," says Urquhart. "So when you start *Dungeon Siege III* you can continue playing and never see a load screen unless you open a save game."

Obsidian hasn't forgotten its past, though – for all the concessions made to a less hardcore-RPG audience, *Dungeon Siege III* is still an absorbing

experience. As in all Obsidian games, *Dungeon Siege III* will feature a deep narrative and plenty of companions to recruit along the way.

Urquhart and his team are looking to ensure the quests feel as compelling as their past titles. "Story in RPGs is all about how you word quests and how you deliver exposition," he says. "If all you're doing is telling the player what to do and not letting them decide for themselves then that's when story is done incorrectly. It's about leading the player rather than pulling them by the nose. You can have a very verbose story with a lot of characters, but players will only enjoy it if they feel that they're participating rather than responding."

And it's this that's at the very core of not just *Dungeon Siege III*, but Obsidian as a company. Both game and studio share the same philosophies – immerse your player and allow them to define their own experience. "Making RPGs is about writing great stories, creating fun characters, and making that world for people to play in," says Urquhart with a smile. From the looks of things, *Dungeon Siege III* is going to achieve all three goals with ease.

THE PAST

We discuss Obsidian's colourful history with company CEO Feargus Urquhart

Intellectualism

Obsidian's past has been predominantly rooted in sequels and follow-ups to other company's IP, with *Alpha Protocol* being the company's only self-produced game. Is this something that will change going forward?

"We often get the criticism that we do a lot of licences – which is something I've done for a lot of my career. I don't have anything against doing original properties,

but they have their challenges. They are harder to get people to believe in – and that's not just the publisher, but also internally at the developer. You're conjuring out of thin air, and that's harder. But this isn't to say that we won't do it again.

"One of the big projects we're proposing to publishers right now is an original IP, and it's something that we really want to do. We learned from *Alpha Protocol* how we're going to approach that. Not just internally, but how we work with our publisher on it as well."

● Obsidian reveals that it does have a new IP in the pipeline.



● That's it. We're becoming spies. They seem to have all the fun.



Pre-Alpha Protocol

Alpha Protocol didn't fare too well critically. We asked Urquhart how he felt about its disparate review scores and general reaction

"That's a hard one. I think there were things in the game we could have done better. We've talked about how the cover system wasn't the best. Would it have been better with no cover system, so we could focus on other things instead? There were certain things we did really well – the whole story, the characters, the branching. Perhaps it was not necessarily the job we did, but there was something beyond the game – how it was represented or how it was sold or what people felt we promised them. Something went off-kilter there. So there's another lesson to learn about communication."

"I WOULD MAKE AN ALPHA PROTOCOL 2"
– Feargus Urquhart

Obsidian Lore

The games Obsidian and Urquhart have worked on over the years



PRE-OBSIDIAN

Before Obsidian there was Black Isle, and during his tenure there Urquhart worked on some genre-defining RPGs



Fallout (1997) > Fallout 2 (1998) > Planescape: Torment (1999) > Icewind Dale (2000)

A Blast From The Past

Would Urquhart ever want to go back and reboot an old IP?

"Of course. We're not making *Alpha Protocol 2* but I would make an *Alpha Protocol 2*. To do a job like this sometimes you have to be optimistic and you have to look to the future and say, 'We can do better'. And I always believe that. There are almost no games in my past that I wouldn't want to go back and make a sequel to. It's hard though. I remember right after finishing *Planescape: Torment* I spoke to Chris Avellone (Obsidian creative director) and asked what he wanted to do, and he was like, 'I don't wanna do a sequel!' We haven't talked about it in about ten years, but it might be different now. But a lot of revisiting old games is about saying, 'Okay, that worked in 1999, what would work now?' And how would you do it again? We'd have to think a lot about it, because it would have to be done right, otherwise the fans of the original would be pissed off and new people wouldn't get it, and that would be terrible."

"ONE OF THE BIG PROJECTS WE'RE PROPOSING TO PUBLISHERS RIGHT NOW IS AN ORIGINAL IP"
- Feargus Urquhart



Desert Bugs

Fallout: New Vegas was praised by many, but also heavily criticised for being fraught with bugs. Is Obsidian's reputation as a developer that releases buggy games fair?

"I think it's fair and unfair at the same time, because in the same conversation that I hear how buggy *KOTOR* and *Alpha Protocol* were I also hear how great they were. Now in the case of *Fallout: New Vegas* we made a gigantic game, and I'm proud with what we were able to do, but I wish it wasn't as glitchy as when it came out. The criticisms people have had are fair, but it's difficult to get a game the size of *New Vegas* bug free. But that's an excuse, and it doesn't matter when someone's paid \$60 for a game. It's something we need to work on. From the standpoint of *Dungeon Siege III* we've been working very hard to make sure it doesn't happen again. We've been playing and playing and playing and playing to ensure it's of a high standard. On top of this, this is the first time we've got to use our own technology on something, which means we know where to find all the bad bugs from the start! >



THE OBSIDIAN YEARS

Due to parent company Interplay Entertainment undergoing financial difficulties, Black Isle went defunct. Much of the staff went on to create what we now know as Obsidian.



Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic II: The Sith Lords (2004) > Neverwinter Nights 2 (2006) > Neverwinter Nights 2: Mask Of The Betrayer (2007) > Alpha Protocol (2010) > Fallout: New Vegas (2010)

THE FUTURE

What does the future hold for Obsidian Entertainment? Will the company stick to working on established IP forever, or will it branch out on its own? Feargus Urquhart reveals all



● RPGs like *Skyrim* prove that the genre is far from dead.



"THERE ARE MORE AND MORE RPG ELEMENTS THAT COULD BE PUT INTO SHOOTERS AND EVEN SPORTS GAMES" – Feargus Urquhart

Levelling Up

How much longer can RPGs survive in an industry becoming increasingly dominated by military shooters?

"I'm not worried about it at all. The RPG genre has been around forever. It was almost the very first genre! I first played D&D as a kid around 1981, so we're now talking about a genre that's about 30 years old and *still* continues to evolve. I wouldn't make *Fallout 1* the same way today. That's just not where gamers are any more. But I think that's one of the awesome things about RPGs – they have that ability to develop and to evolve, from those turn-based games to now being third person and with multiplayer and with all these deeper mechanics. RPGs just give you a different experience to the FPS. When it comes to being immersed in a world and choosing what you want to do – that's an RPG. It's a human thing that we enjoy doing and I just don't see it ever going away."

+1AK-47

Since Urquhart has such confidence in the future of RPGs, does he also agree with Cliff Bleszinski's quote that the future of all games, particularly shooters, is in the design of RPGs?

"I think what Cliff ultimately meant is that you want to give players the ability to create a persona within the game, and the RPG offers that element more so than any other genre. And I agree with Cliff on that. There are more and more RPG elements that could be put into shooters and even sports games. However, I don't think what Cliff was talking about was story and choice. I think that is an aspect about RPGs that will always be different than in an FPS. With FPSs it's all about the cathartic gameplay and the fun of visceral, fast, forward-momentum gameplay. And that's a great experience! But I think the choice of being dropped in a world and choosing where you want to go – that's an RPG. Shooters will only take different aspects from the genre, like stats and skills."

● Nearly all online FPSs have some kind of RPG element.





"PLAYING RPGS IS A HUMAN THING THAT WE ENJOY DOING AND I JUST DON'T SEE IT GOING AWAY" - Feargus Urquhart

"IT'D BE COOL TO MAKE A DUNE GAME - I'D LOVE TO DO THAT" - Feargus Urquhart

A Memorable Future

What developments does Urquhart hope to see in the games industry in the coming years?

"For us, it's hard in open-world streaming RPGs to put a lot of people in a town because of all the memory constraints. If we had less memory constraints we could make towns feel bigger and more inhabited, which would immerse the player more in the world. RPG worlds used to be fairly static, but memory

could enable things like having water pool up, or snow falling in drifts, or wind eroding things. In the future we could have worlds where the terrain could be affected and much more. But there's more than that - like we love having companions in our games, so what are the next things we can do with that? What could Kinect or Move do for that? What could a higher-level processor enable us to do? How could we make them a bigger part in the story? We really focus our thoughts on the future on where we want to move these things."

Obsidian's Dream Project

With Obsidian becoming ever more prominent in the gaming industry, it could soon be at a point where it can pick and choose the IPs it works with. But what worlds would Urquhart like to explore most?



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

"Well... I worked on *Dungeons & Dragons* games for almost 13 years, and it's been odd not doing that for our recent projects. We were really looking forward to making a fourth edition *D&D* game and I still think it'd be really cool to do that."

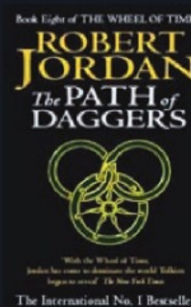
DUNE

"It'd be cool to make a *Dune* game - I'd love to do that"



WHEEL OF TIME

"One of the things we do have an agreement on is with Red Eagle to do a game in the *Wheel Of Time* series, but there's no development going on as of yet as we're still trying to work out the business end of how it would all work. But when they're ready to move forward with it that's something we're really looking forward to."



WWII EPIC

"I've always wondered whether you could make a WWII RPG. We did an intellectual exercise about that years ago, during which we discussed using the Infinity engine (the engine used to create *Baldur's Gate*) to make a game based in WWII. We had weird analogies, like make the radio operator the mage, because he'd be able to call in fire support and things like that. So, that could be something interesting to experiment with."



RESIDENT EVIL: OPERATION RACCOON

WHY IT WILL

DEVELOPED BY A WESTERN STUDIO? KILL LEON KENNEDY? NO CHRIS, CLAIRE OR JILL?

Here's a story that may or may not be true but it's damn good, so read it anyway. Little Jimmy is playing *Resident Evil*, a new survival-horror game that his mum bought him for PlayStation (yes, it's 18-rated. Age ratings weren't such a big deal back then. Stop ruining the story). As Little Jimmy saw Chris Redfield stomp through the infamous double doors of that mansion, he thought that one day, he'll get to make his own *Resident Evil*. It won't be a lonely, glacial trudge through a quiet mansion. It will be a rocking third-person shooter. It will have four players working together. It will connect via that new internet thing to let him team up with his friends. There will be a fast-paced mode where two teams try to kill each other. Oh, and it will have a character called Bertha.

Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City developer Slant Six Games may not have a Little Jimmy on its books. Hell, it might even employ a Jim, or

a James. But someone, somewhere at Slant Six Games is reinventing Capcom's iconic survival-horror series as you read this, without the series creator's hand at the controls. And yes, it'll be a third-person shooter, with four players online teaming up for co-op or joining forces for deathmatch. And yes, it has a character called Bertha.

THE TEAM BLUDGEON THEIR WAY THROUGH RACCOON CITY'S CLAUSTROPHOBIC ALLEYS

The rumours seemed too far-fetched when we first heard them yet here we are, watching Capcom demo its latest addition to the series. Developed by Vancouver-based Slant Six Games, it's the first time Capcom has allowed its iconic IP to wander overseas. It's an unusual choice given Slant Six has only had one full-blooded console release – the remarkably average

SOCOM: Confrontation – but producer Masachika Kawata explains why.

"The thing that attracted us to Slant Six was the passion. Not only for creating games but for creating a *Resident Evil* game," says Kawata. "They really wanted to work on a *Resident Evil* game. They came to Tokyo and made a presentation about what they wanted

a member of Capcom. The Japanese publisher has retained some sense of control for the ambitious project and it's the Eastern half of the project demoing *Operation Raccoon City* today. Mike Jones, assistant producer on *Operation Raccoon City*, introduces the team. Here's Kawata! Confident bow. Here's the director on the project! Hurried nod. Here's the current best player in the world and the deadliest man in Capcom's R&D team! Nervous wave. With that, they sit down and the co-op mode rolls into life.

Taking place in Raccoon City between the events of *Resident Evil 2* and *3* on the series timeline, those grim, darkly lit streets are the setting for the stage we're being shown. The objective is set: kill all police officers. The police officers are now shuffling, moaning members of the undead and we watch as the Umbrella team – Vector, Spectre, Bertha and Beltway – cut through them and dance around them with

to do. We took that away, massaged it, kept working together and we're now working on something really, really interesting. But it was that passion and that fire that ended up drawing us to work with Slant Six on this project."

Meet the team

As you may have guessed, Kawata is not a member of Slant Six Games. He's

OPERATION RACCOON CITY



CITY

PLAY AS UMBRELLA CORP?

SHOCK

YOU

AN ONLINE
THIRD-PERSON
SHOOTER?

ease thanks to the slick third-person shooter movement. Melee attacks open up a prompt for a 'brutal kill' execution, grenades can be thrown and the Umbrella team can also take cover. Cover? From zombie bites? More on that later.

Then disaster. One of the zombies gets stuck in an arms-outstretched pose, with no amount of shooting or melee attacks prompting it back into its usual shuffling and biting routine. The Deadliest Man At Capcom is reduced to panicked stabs at his buttons. Kawata leans over and wrestles the pad from his grasp, steering Bertha away from the outstretched zombie. Kawata then apologises to the onlooking press via the translator. The rest of the mission plays out without incident as the team bludgeon their way through Raccoon City's claustrophobic alleyways and dirty streets, until all four find themselves overcome by zombies at >



● You'll need to keep an eye out for zombies at all times as they'll sneak up and sink their teeth into you when you least expect it.

THE CHARACTERS YOU'LL PLAY AS

The Umbrella team



Beltway >

Skill: Frag mine
Weapon: Machine gun
Class: Demolitions



< Bertha

Skill: Adrenalin shot
Weapon: Mini SMG
Class: Medic



Spectre >

Skill: Infra-red vision
Weapon: Submachine gun
Class: Surveillance



Vector >

Skill: Mimicry
Weapon: Covert Rifle
Class: Recon



BIOHAZARD



BIOHAZARD



> the petrol station, distracted by the gas pumps exploding and carnage.

Kawata apologises again as the demo ends but his vision for the title is clear enough. This isn't a traditional *Resident Evil* title but a new direction using a familiar setting, with the Umbrella uniforms essentially an excuse to play a harder, faster and more chaotic version of *Resident Evil* than ever before. Kill Leon is the mantra for *Operation Raccoon City*, the bulletpoint for both the trailer and Capcom's goals on this title. As the room fills with the sound of Dictaphones being clicked off and bags being zipped up, Kawata apologises once more. "Someone's going to get bitch-slapped!" titters one journalist as everyone files out the room. No shit.

Next up, we get stuck into the Versus mode. Inevitably, for a game hardwired with every third-person shooter gimmick around, this is where *Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City* thrives. Two teams of four, one made up of the Umbrella crew and the other made up of default classes, clash at a Raccoon City petrol station. As the gameplay demo had just shown, throwing grenades at a petrol station has explosive results and in a tight team deathmatch arena, it makes the actual match unpredictable and exciting.

Enemies and abilities

The other mechanics fall into place. Taking cover makes sense as you duck out of harm's way from the other team's fire. Different classes add a different dynamic.

Zombies hunt players injured from gunfire, smashing the camp-while-healing tradition usually found in these games. The toad-like Hunter from the original *Resident Evil* also drops in to attack both teams, changing the dynamic as its fast speed and claw swipes pose a threat to everyone in the match. Even when it dies and its body hits the floor, it packs one last lunge before breathing its last.

THE HUNTER'S DEATH SWIPE CATCHES US RIGHT ACROSS THE JAW

Really, it's the zombies that are the difference. You can almost ignore them as you charge around the streets and rooftops hunting down the opposing team but they have a subtle influence on the match without you realising. If you see a green herb health lying around (see? Some *Resi* traditions have made it in after all), you'll clear the area of zombies first before the vulnerable picking up animation kicks in. When tucked up against a wall and peeking around the corner, you'll also check behind you every now and then to ensure zombie jaws aren't about to sink

into your leg. Perhaps the biggest factor is when you're trying to scarp from safety when a gunfight goes wrong. Injured and attracting more zombies, you need to find an escape route that gets you away from both them and whoever was firing at you. And if there's a Hunter stomping about...

You can mix and match abilities, with our custom perks menu teasing us with blank slots to be filled in as Capcom reveals more info at a later date. For now, we have Mimicry (imitate the other team) and Active Camouflage (invisibility cloak) for Vector, while Bertha has Adrenalin (run faster) and Morphine (invincibility) shots, as poor Beltway can only offer a frag mine in response. Spectre is looking the most useful of the bunch. His Infra-red Vision is almost

useless but Sonar Vision turns the map into a series of blue and white lines, picking out opponents and zombies from behind walls, giving you a huge advantage.

Recipe for success?

Watching over the press playing through Versus, Mike Ross and fellow Capcom producer Rey Jimenez swap observations, as **Play** keeps quiet and listens in to gain rare insight on what the developers had to say. The map has too many dead ends. The amount of points for killing a Hunter needs to go up. Beltway's frag mine



MEET THE MAN WHO'S MAKING IT

Masachika Kawata, producer

How will *Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City* stand out from other zombie games and third-person shooters?

One thing this game has that's different is the triple threat. There are zombies and monsters in this game but they aren't really the main threat. They're something that's always there, something you always have to be aware of. You're trying to figure out what's the best way to use them to your advantage. That's something, just in terms of the gameplay, that we've never done before. That's never really been done before in third-person shooters.

How do the team encourage people to enjoy playing as the bad guys?

We're embracing that theme of 'you are the bad guy.' We're trying to say, okay, what would that be like? We don't know much about Umbrella other than a few key people but even if you look at the banner [points to *Operation Raccoon City* logo], there's blood all over the character, he's very scary, he's definitely a bad guy.

There's also this phrase that we've been kicking around during development. And it's 'kill Leon'. So that's something we're embracing and trying to find, what kind of interesting experiences we can do that we wouldn't normally do in a *Resident Evil* game.

Do the characters have their own personalities?

They do. We're not focusing on campaign right now but rest assured that things you expect from *Resident Evil* – the awesome cut-scenes, the story, the Capcom characters – will definitely be there in full force. There are a lot of interesting touches you'll find out, like why are these characters doing these dark deeds, why are they so bent on ensuring all the evidence against Raccoon is gone – all that stuff will be made clear. And individual characters – like why does Bertha carry stuff like scalpels and things like that, all that will be made clear.



● Hunters will return to the *Resident Evil* fold in *Operation Raccoon City*.

needs tweaking. Then, as a Hunter falls to our sustained shotgun assaults, our concentration momentarily switches off and the Hunter's death swipe catches **Play** right across the jaw. Beltway's lifeless body slams against a nearby car. Rey Jimenez explodes out of his hushed conversation. "Wow! I've not seen anyone get killed by that before!" he shouts, grinning from ear to ear. Fortunately, he wasn't watching when we were killed by it again soon after.

Playing Versus mode highlights what the team is trying to do with the *Resident Evil* series. Yes, it's being nudged along a more familiar direction but it's a path the series has never travelled before. It has taken 32 games, 12 consoles, a GunCon peripheral and the rise and fall of Milla Jovovich's career and here we are, at the apex of *Resident Evil*'s evolution. This spin-off is as unlikely as *Resident Evil: The Musical* as Capcom steps into a brave new world with a brave new Western studio leading the way, yet that's what makes it so intriguing. Will it succeed as a third-person online shooter? Is this merely stapling *Resident Evil* onto a popular genre for extra sales?

Kawata has the final say. "Honestly, it's not really that so much that has motivated us to take *Resident Evil* and try something new within that framework. It's more just that challenge of 'okay, *Resident Evil* is a known concept, we want to do something new," he explains. "What can we do? Purely, as creators, that's more where we're coming from. Obviously we consider the market and what people are wanting but for us, it's what we want to do and we think is going to work for *Resident Evil*. That's the main driving force behind taking *Resident Evil* in a more action-focused direction."



● Police officers are now among the shambling undead horde.



● A number of special skills will help your team achieve their objectives.

THE HISTORY OF RE

WE CHART THE MANY
SUCCESSES (AND ODD FAILURE)
OF THE GREATEST ZOMBIE
SHOOTER FRANCHISE



Resident Evil (1996)

PSone 95% Play 08

It may not have invented the survival-horror genre, but the original *Resident Evil* put it firmly on the map.

We gave it a huge score mainly thanks to those legendary moments: the dogs crashing through the windows; the fantastic(ally bad) opening FMV; the chilling horror; the puzzles; and, of course, the script. Oh, the script. Jill sandwiches, masters of unlocking, hoping pools of blood aren't CHRIS'S blood – *Resi* was the exact point we noticed that maybe the CD-ROM revolution in gaming wasn't all that perfect. And you know what? We love it all the more for helping us to realise that.

But best of all, *Resident Evil* introduced the world to Barry Burton.

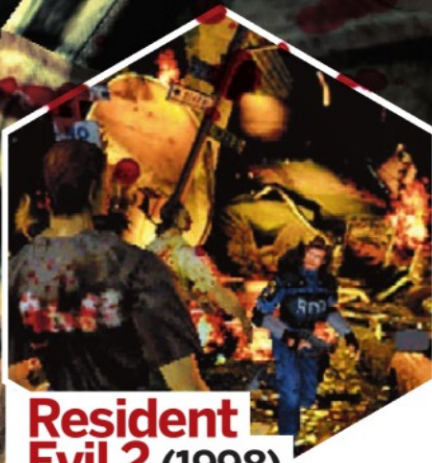
Resident Evil: Director's Cut (1997)

PSone 83% Play 27

While we were all waiting for *Resident Evil 2*, Capcom did the worst thing in the world and delayed it. By way of apology, *Resident Evil: Director's Cut* was released.

Aside from a remixed version of the original wherein the locations of items were changed, new costumes were available and enemy placement was different, *Director's Cut* also saw a demo of *Resident Evil 2*.

It was a nice stopgap, though unless you wanted to pay a premium for a demo it wasn't essential. The later, US and Japan-only release of the DualShock edition was another distraction on the way to *Resi 2*.



Resident Evil 2 (1998)

PSone 96% Play 32

Holding the title we've just made up of Best *Resident Evil* Game Until 2005, *Resi 2* was most definitely worth the slightly extended wait we had to endure.

Ramping everything up as any good sequel should, the game saw players not just take control of two different characters, but two different characters in storylines that criss-cross constantly throughout play.

"So what? The original did something similar," you say. Well we say shut it. *Resident Evil 2* also had one of the best systems we've seen in any game with its



alternate scenarios. Complete the game as Claire Redfield, unlock Leon Kennedy's 'B' scenario and vice-versa. These 'B' scenarios, rather than just being a few different items or one or two locations were a whole extra game each, telling the story from the perspective you didn't get to see first time around.

The hidden extras – the Gatling gun and Tofu, for example – and the fact Ian used to be able to complete it in one sitting without taking a hit, apparently, and you've got a compelling reason as to why, for so long, *Resident Evil 2* was hailed as the best in the series. Though we're still waiting for Capcom to release the abandoned *Resi 1.5* on PlayStation Network – get on it, folks.



Resident Evil 3: Nemesis (1999)

PSone 90% Play 55

The third game in the 'proper' series saw the last main entry in the PSone's lifetime and brought with it some interesting elements that seemed – just like with *Resi 2*'s multiple scenarios – to be lost to the ether.

Aside from the addition of (finally) a 180-degree quick-turn and the ability to dodge – two elements that made the traditionally terrible *Resi* controls that bit better – we also saw the titular Nemesis. Picture Ryan King, gone a bit wrong, and you'll understand the threat faced. This beast would pursue you through the entire game, leading to a few choices throughout the game.

Fight or flight, essentially, but it added that bit more choice to the usual, now rather stale encounters. *Resident Evil 3* also saw the introduction of one of the series' best features: Mercenaries. An extra game so beloved it's soon to get its own game, though not on PlayStation, so shh.



Resident Evil: Survivor (2000)

PSone 80% Play 61

Taking *Resident Evil* back to where it was originally, *Survivor* was presented in a first-person viewpoint and was a part of the long-forgotten genre known as the lightgun game.

The main problem with *Survivor* was that it was just *bad*. Quite the issue, we're sure you'll agree. It was buggy, the story hardly made sense, it looked *awful* and it just made no real sense as to why it existed. Still, we gave it 80% so it was clearly... very... good? Hmm.

Resident Evil: Survivor 2 Code: Veronica (2001)

PS2 63% Play 87

Taking what made the original *Survivor* such an 'excellent' experience and transporting it to the PS2 also didn't make for what we would call a good game.

Another lightgun game, *Survivor 2* took players through some non-canonical events from the *Code Veronica* part of the *Resident Evil* world. The reason we can't remember much beyond that should be obvious, but here it is anyway: it's because it wasn't very good, or memorable.

Resident Evil: Dead Aim (2003) PS2 56% Play 103

In 2003 Capcom released an even worse lightgun shooter. Capcom had to stick to releases like this though, as the main, numbered *Resi* games were contractually exclusive to Nintendo's GameCube.

This meant that PlayStation owners were stuck with sub-par semi-distractions that still didn't take full advantage of the lightgun or more traditional control schemes.

Fortunately this was the last we heard of this line of *Resi* titles, at least on PlayStation. The Wii did see the *Chronicles* games, but rather than being *rubbish* they actually ended up being quite good.

SIDENT EVIL



Resident Evil Outbreak (2004)

PS2 71% on Metacritic
(N/A in Play)

A divisive entry to the series and one that has many positives and negatives to back up whoever's making whatever argument they want to make. We have to write this because Ryan is a big advocate of *Outbreak*. But in all seriousness this was a game well ahead of its time, offering co-operative online play in the traditional *Resident Evil* style, in which up to four players tried to get out of Raccoon City before it was destroyed. Except for Europe, where online functionality was taken out.

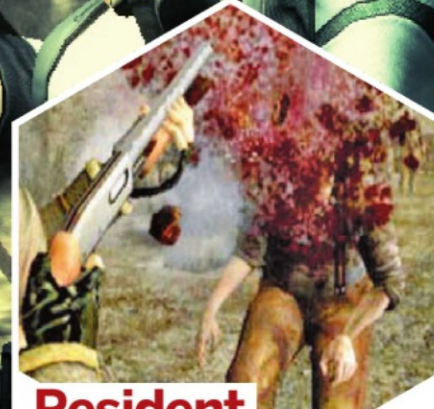
There was fun to be had, but this ended up being more a case of missed potential than anything else – though as we mentioned it does have its proponents. Still, co-operative survival against zombie outbreaks... that's definitely something you don't see in gaming very much these days. What's that? *Left 4 what?*

Resident Evil Outbreak File 2 (2005)

PS2 58% on Metacritic
(N/A in Play)

Where the original *Outbreak* missed the point entirely in Europe, *File 2* sorted its act out by letting players in this part of the world play online. So it should have been a better game, right? Well, not really.

In the year between releases the world of gaming had moved on, and *Outbreak File 2* just felt *old*. An expansion pack more than anything else, it never really made a splash and felt like quite the death knell for this off-shoot of the series. Though to be honest we wouldn't be entirely averse to another online-focused *Resi* game – the infrastructure is there now, so it's an idea Capcom is hopefully bandying around. Just so long as they make a better game next time around.



Resident Evil 4 (2005)

PS2 97% Play 135

The bar of quality hadn't been raised by the *Resi* series for years, and the updates over the years for *Resi 4* – while getting us excited – hadn't really got the blood pumping. We really should have been more excited, as *Resident Evil 4* was released and didn't just raise the bar – it smashed the old one up and put its own one down. That mark of quality – of reinvention – still hasn't been beaten by any sequel to this day. Not even the likes of *Uncharted 2* can lay claim to tearing up the series' rulebook to such a degree and starting again with something so utterly fresh and compelling.

Controls were different, aiming was different, graphically it was a huge step up, the story took zombies out of it, QTEs were in, we still didn't see any kind of return to *Resi 2*'s scenarios but there were still plenty of extras and secrets, you could rescue a dog, there was a boss who seemed to think he was Napoleon, the... look, if you missed it when it came out you might not understand just what *Resident Evil 4* meant to the series, or what it meant to gaming. Was the best, still the best.



Resident Evil 5 (2009)

PS3 86% Play 177

Resident Evil 5 didn't quite fill the boots of its immediate predecessor. While a good game, there was just something *wrong* with it that dragged *Resi 5* down. The introduction of co-op play was great – when played with a friend online. When played alone, or with idiotic strangers? That's where it was pushing being a bad game. Nevertheless, the adventures of Chris and Sheva, backed up by some decent DLC and the eventual release of the *Gold Edition*, which brought back Barry Burton, made *Resi 5* another welcome addition to the series. As long as nobody brings up alleged racist connotations.

The *Gold Edition* also saw the seemingly obligatory implementation of Move support, bringing with it all the thrills and spills that motion control is known to bring. So yeah, not a huge amount.

Resident Evil 5 was a disappointment, but coming after *Resi 4* it was going to have to be something absolutely epoch-making for us to really go wild. Instead it was a collection of interesting ideas wrapped around a very good game. Nothing to scoff at, certainly, but our hopes – after number four – were somewhat dashed.



Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City (2011)

The next step in the evolution of *Resident Evil* is set to take things back to the era of numbers two and three. Instead of going back to Leon, Claire or Jill, *Operation Raccoon City* will offer an 'alternate' take on the timeline. What that means is that for once we get to play as the bad guys.

A third-person action game with what we've been promised are controls to match, using developer Slant Six's experience on the *SOCOM* series to make things a more tactical shooter. Regardless of how it turns out, it's clearly going to be fun trying to kill Leon from the perspective of the evil Umbrella Corporation. Quite fun indeed.



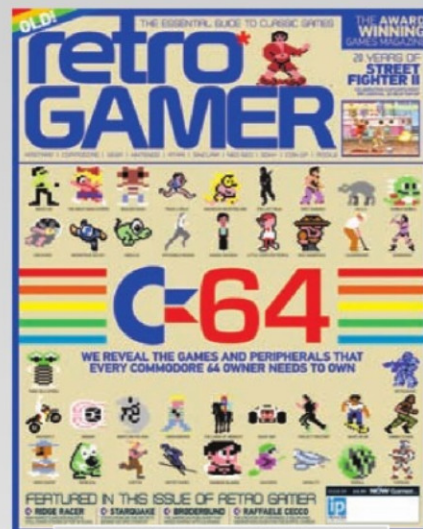
Resident Evil Code: Veronica X (2001)

PS2 85% Play 77

We still remember the day when *Code: Veronica X* arrived on PS2. We laughed because those Dreamcast owners didn't have it all to themselves any more. And, in fact, we had a better version than theirs (at least in Europe), with added cut-scenes and a few nips and tucks.

Rather than a true next-gen version of *Resi*, *CVX* played a bit like *Resi 3* – it just looked better. A few elements differed, like the removal of the dodge function and the addition of dual wielding. Other than that, while it was great fun, it did just feel like *Resi* by numbers. Not even the return of Claire and Chris Redfield as controllable characters could push our score beyond the (impressive) 85% mark. We'd have to wait until 2005 for that.

Requirements: Apple iPhone 3G, 3GS, iPod Touch or iPad >>> iPhone 3.1.2 or higher >>> an Internet connection



Available on the iPhone App Store

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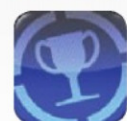


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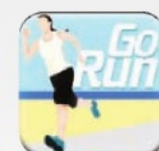
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FIFA 12

The New Formation

HOW EA IS GOING TO REVOLUTIONISE ITS BIGGEST FRANCHISE



"We know some guys will buy it one year and maybe not the next and they need a little bit extra, a little innovation, they need something that really revolutionises rather than evolves the experience. For that we try to do big innovations. The first was probably 360-degree dribbling, then it was the physical play and then the AI and now the biggest thing is the Impact Engine" – Santi Jaramillo, gameplay producer

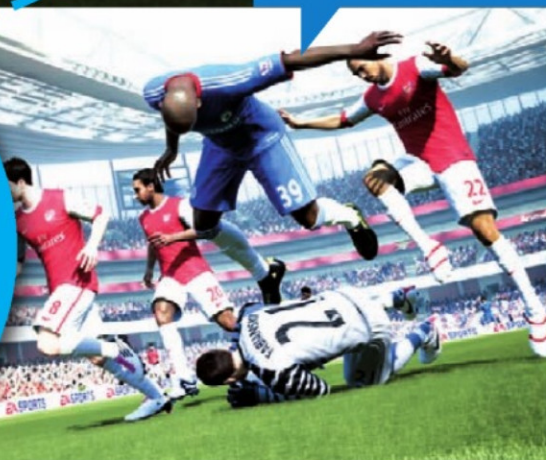
Impact Engine

The biggest addition to *FIFA 12* is a brand-new physics engine. Inspired in part by the work of the *Fight Night* team the Impact Engine reads player collisions and will change animations in real-time. This should cut down on clipping errors and create more realistic reactions to tackles.

"We've put together an interactive tutorial so that right when you get into the game we'll immediately teach you all of the new controls, you'll know exactly where everything is and how to use it. We've learnt a lot from the focus tests so far and we've got a lot left planned for the rest of the year to refine it so it's not too much of a barrier to entry when you pick up the game" – Aaron McHardy, gameplay producer

True Injuries

Thanks to the new Impact Engine the game can work out the torque and impact on joints and limbs, re-creating real injuries in the game. Tired players can also pull groins or hamstrings like in real football and players returning from injury in career modes can re-injure themselves if pushed too hard.



Precision Dribbling

Players can now control the ball in much tighter spaces and with lighter ball touches, tightening their turning circle. Smaller players will also be able to hold up the ball without needing to be strong, making small touches as they hold off a defender.

"There are these moments where the two come together and it just looks so much like real players and real interaction that you don't even think that it's a videogame any more" – David Rutter, line producer

Tactical Defending

EA is stripping out the 'heat seeking missile' of the Press function (holding down  to tackle). This is replaced by a Contain feature using the same button. Tackling will require an additional button press making it more about timing and skill.



Pro Player Intelligence

An upgrade to the Personality + system that was introduced for *FIFA 11*. PPI gives players an awareness of the special abilities of those around them and a self awareness of their own skills. That means that players will make runs and take up positions that support their skills.

"If you buy Xavi for Stoke then you'll see how that almost permeates the entire midfield and how it has this impact on everyone around him, which is what happens in real life" – Santi Jaramillo, gameplay producer

Team Changers

In Career modes Pro Player Intelligence will make a huge difference. Your Virtual Pro player will change how your team plays as he develops. New signings will also make a huge difference. Teams will react differently and make different decisions based on their presence.

Two Sides Of The Ball

In combination Tactical Defending and Precision Dribbling should open up more space for playing. The idea is that with defending becoming more difficult and dribbling more controlled you can work the ball around the top of the box and the wings without losing possession.

"It's always a battle and we have a long list of things we want to do. On the visual side last year we know our player models didn't look so great in the low level of detail so that was something we felt we had to address. We've got to prioritise each year what to bring to the game" – Aaron McHardy, gameplay producer

Testing Makes Perfect

EA Vancouver is already testing its new defensive and dribbling systems to make sure they work properly. Some players are taking some time to get used to them, but advanced gamers who already use the jockey button (holding **L2** to turn your defender towards the ball) are coping well.

Game-day Realism

FIFA 12 will also be introducing a new Tele camera lens that creates foreshortening (objects in the distance will look smaller) making the angle look more realistic and more like a real broadcast. New lighting and shadowing are also being introduced as well as better low detail player models.

Up Front

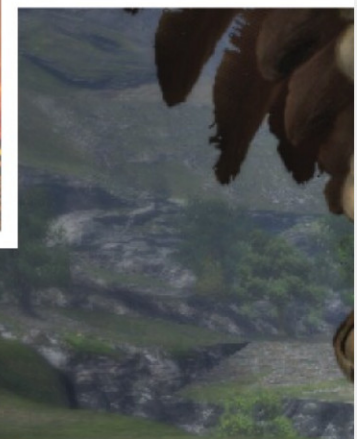
Some cosmetic changes are already being talked about including a brand-new menu system. This runs horizontally across the bottom of the screen showing all your options clearly and quickly without leaving the front page. You'll get dynamic animations of your chosen Arena player in the background, too.

PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: 2012

It's not been announced yet but we're expecting multiplayer to feature.



Dragon's Dogma

Lost Planet + Oblivion + Monster Hunter + Shadow Of The Colossus

PS3

Lost Planet 2 crossed with *Oblivion*. *Monster Hunter* crossed with *Shadow Of The Colossus*. Lazy games journalists tend to speak the language of comparisons to get their point across, because it's easier than saying it-looks-like-a-multiplayer-based-game-in-Ye-Olde-Times-where-a-group-of-you-fight-big-creatures. And hey! Within the first two sentences of this preview, you already know exactly what *Dragon's Dogma* is all about.

Unfortunately, word counts and angry designers demand we write more to fill these pages, so let's expand. *Dragon's Dogma* is the brainchild of director Hideaki Itsuno (*Resident Evil 4*) and producer Hiroyuki Kobayashi (*Devil May Cry 4*). "This is a game that I've wanted to make for years," Itsuno says. "I've never felt that we had the technology in place to take on a project of this scale. Now, we have consoles powerful enough and a dev team at Capcom knowledgeable enough to bring this vision to life."

This game, as it turns out, is both a confirmation of Capcom's hallmarks and a step outside its usual boundaries. The lunacy of the

story is typical Capcom, the polite way of saying it's utter nonsense. Your heart has been stolen by a dragon, who then challenges you to win it back. In doing so, you uncover why he stole it and what he's trying to teach you – the Dogma part of the title, Kobayashi tells us – as you scramble around the countryside and castles slaying beasts. Right.

Other Capcom strengths are evident in the control scheme, which allows you to draw your weapon, fire a volley of arrows into the sky, slash at nearby orcs with daggers, charge a griffin, climb up its back, hold onto its wings as it takes to the air and stab at it while airborne. All of this is done on the face and shoulder buttons, without needing to dip into the menus to select different weapons as the game rattles onward. Real-time weapon change is a thing of the past, it seems. Poor *Genji*.

Playing as a Strider class warrior, you team up with three 'pawns' – in this case, Mage class and two Fighter class – as you try to take down a Griffin. This scrap involves slaying nearby orcs, so their corpses can be used as bait for the Griffin to swoop down and eat them. This

is your chance to climb on its back while your other pawns fire arrows, cast spells and shout at you.

A few things about this boss fight stand out, and they're not all good. We're positive people, so we'll start with the good. First, the Griffin has weight to it. Real weight. When it swooshes past, its shadow darkens the sky, the screen blurs and your character stumbles slightly in the turbulence. When it crashes to the ground, it does so with a bassy thud as its battered body screeches to a halt. Likewise, although well disguised, it's a boss battle and as such, there are attack patterns and weaknesses to exploit. You have to think about what you're doing and it's a fairly stiff challenge.

The negative side? "I'll draw it near!" "I'll draw it near!" "I'll draw it near!" "I'll draw it near!" We heard that line uttered four times in a row and not even by the same character. Our pawns blurted it out immediately after someone else did until finally, someone did draw the bloody thing near, only for "I will fall this beast!" "I will fall this beast!" "I will..." ALRIGHT. We get it. Shut up. That, combined with the wonky AI, make you feel like a teacher trying

to boss about naughty school kids rather than leading a well-drilled unit into war.

Even so, *Dragon's Dogma* is clearly built for multiplayer, which would stomp out those problems. Capcom didn't confirm multiplayer but teams of four defeating monsters? An enclosed MMO structure? Using an improved MT Framework engine that multiplayer-focused *Lost Planet 2* was built upon? It'll be hard to act surprised when Capcom finally admits that yes, you can team up with the likes of *dap1mpsl4y3r* and *xXMLGsupaproXx* online.

We're teased with promises of an open-world structure as well, where you can visit anywhere and fight anything you see. We're also shown clips of a boss battle against a four-headed hydra, as it tears apart a wooden village and dwarfs the hero. So hopefully, you'll now understand the comparisons. Teamplay versus big opponent? *Lost Planet 2*. MMO structure with action controls? *Monster Hunter*. It has fields and castles and other old things? Obligatory *Oblivion* comparison. Climbing up on a living thing? *Shadow Of The Colossus*. Yet what Capcom really wants is for *Dragon's Dogma* to stand on its own. This is a first, confident step towards that eventual goal.

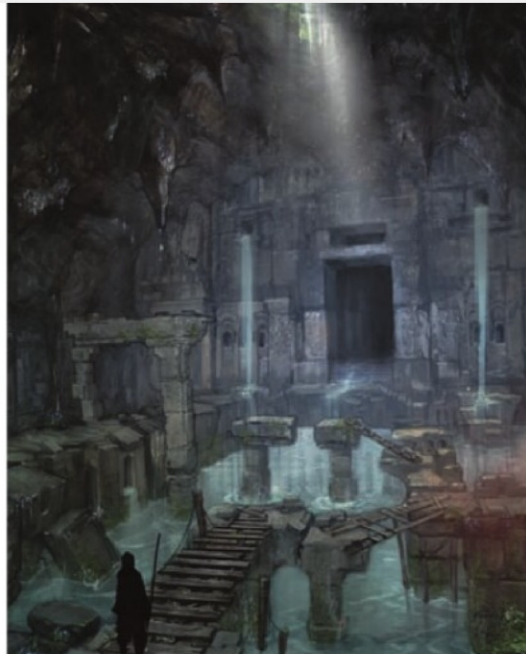
Dragon's Dogma is being developed by Capcom. There's currently no official website but check out dragonsdogma.com. It's awesome!

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Take on mythical creatures in team-based action game.
- Story outcome will depend on your actions throughout the game.
- For example, helping the peasants will grant you extra items and info.
- But we won't do that because we're too snobby and cool.

READ ME

A dragon has stolen your heart, so you have to get it back. We're not told how you survive without it and forgot to ask. Oops. We're idiots.

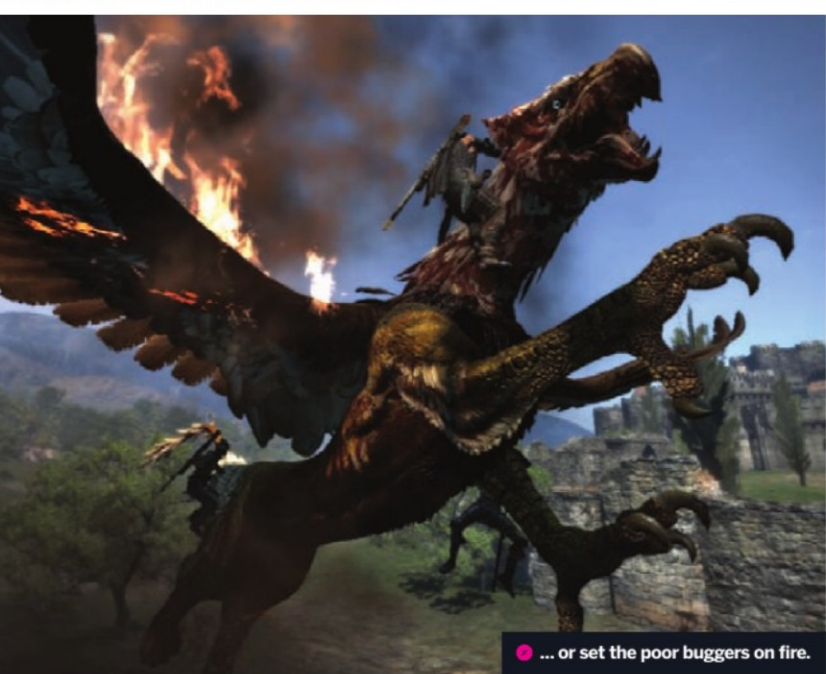


IN-DEPTH

There's plenty of *Oblivion*-esque castles and countryside for you to explore.



Once lured to the ground, you can jump on the Griffins' backs and bring them down with your sword...



... or set the poor buggers on fire.



UNDER THE INFLUENCE

We ask Hideaki Itsuno about his influences...

"UP UNTIL I was in junior high, we didn't have a lot of fantasy-based media in Japan, so there wasn't a lot of influence in there. But once I entered junior high I got really caught up with the *Lord Of The Rings* series. Coincidentally enough, around the same time *NeverEnding Story* came out, so I'm sure that had an influence, too. And also role-playing, not videogame-based ones but the D&D type with dice."

PREVIEW

IN-DEPTH



RELEASE DATE: JULY

inFamous 2

Play God and build your own utopia

Regardless of the user-created levels, we really can't wait to get our hands on this.



Here's one Sony made earlier and took a screen of so we could pretend we made it.

X MARKS THE SPOT

It's actually a glowing green marker WHILE STOMPING AROUND the city in the main story, the beta also flags up missions created by other players with glowing markers. It's an interesting way to see how others have taken advantage of the more unusual landmarks but our concern is how are these limited? Will the game become a sea of glowing green marks? Only the final game can answer these questions!



It's all well and good being a boss until you get something stuck in your eye you can't remove.

PS3

So, brand new to *inFamous 2*, you can create your own levels. "But why?" you cry. "Aren't the devs supposed to create the levels for me?" First of all, don't interrupt, it's rude. Second, the user-generated content will kick *inFamous 2* from 'vaguely interesting sequel that looks nice' to 'look at this level I made or I won't be your friend any more' levels of emotional investment.

Consider this. You're not just constructing a playground for Cole to show off his powers. Instead, you can create a story, with text prompts and the ability to force the player towards certain locations. You can't throw together a horribly patronising tutorial level to kick things off but with enough imagination, you can re-create that 'Dragon Laser 9000' screenplay you've had brewing in your head all these years using Cole, a city you created, 50 citizens throwing rocks at you and a couple of well-thought-out text prompts.

Then there's the technical beanpole side of *inFamous 2* where you can really get your hands

dirty. You can use monitors, logic modifiers, script commands and object modifiers to slice open the game's code and rework it to however your imagination sees fit. You can even tweak the gravity, cue up music and set the time of day.

Obviously *LBP 2* has been here before, which does dull some of the shine on *inFamous 2*'s level creation. So here's something that *LittleBigPlanet 2* didn't do. At each user-created marker in *inFamous 2*, you can take created levels and 'remix' them, seeing how they're created and stealing tips from those who know how to make cars move and stitch together fancy set pieces.

It's complicated, it's deep, it's the perfect way to fanny about when you've had enough of the main game. It's the closest you'll come to making your own game without the university degree or the cut-throat hiring process and it's not like Activision will let you make 'Dragon Laser 9000' anytime soon, right?

Sucker Punch is developing *inFamous 2* so check out infamous.thegame.com for more info.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- You can create your very own levels!
- And like *LittleBigPlanet 2*, more complicated as well.
- Like *LittleBigPlanet 2*, it's more fun than it sounds.
- It's the only way you'll play 'Dragon Laser 9000'.

READ ME

Sony's sequel to its surprise hit that lets you stomp around a huge city and then go crazy creating your own missions. Smash hit of the summer?

FIRST LOOK



RELEASE DATE: Q4 2011

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception

First multiplayer details roll in

PS3 Far be it for a magazine as esteemed as **Play** to move away from a clever, witty intro that allows us to conjure verbal spells with our magical wordplay in favour of a list of new game features. But hell, just for this page and for the sake of the first *Uncharted 3* multiplayer details, let's do just that.

Naughty Dog has shown off two multiplayer maps so far. Chateau takes place in the fiery building you've seen in the trailers while Airstrip has cars chasing cargo planes with their loading bay open, with players leaping between the convoys to get a better shot. What Naughty Dog is trying to do is re-create the dynamic set pieces of single-player in multiplayer. That means instead of the usual rigid, static maps you see in multiplayer, you'll have moving objects such as planes, convoys and collapsing buildings. In short: stuff happens. A lot of stuff happens.

To keep the competitive side of multiplayer as dramatic as the environments, Naughty Dog will also offer Power Plays should a sizeable lead open up in a match. This comes in Elimination form (stops other team respawning) and Exposed (shows the location of the other team). They're interesting ideas that run alongside the expected multiplayer features, such as loadouts that let you customise weapons and boosters (or perks).

You can also upload screenshots and video clips of multiplayer gameplay to Facebook to run alongside 'got drunk on da beach last nite and woke up with phone up my bum lol' status updates. Most importantly of all, you'll be getting an *Uncharted* beta with all of the above! Those on PSN Plus will get a beta on 28 June, everyone else on 5 July. Start counting down the days...

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception is being developed by Naughty Dog. Check out naughtydog.com for info.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's *Uncharted 3*!
- Which will build upon the surprise success of *Uncharted 2MP*.
- In multiplayer!
- This time it comes in 3D and split-screen flavours, too. Nice.

READ ME

The beta will feature both maps mentioned above but no word on whether it will support split-screen and 3D as the full version will.



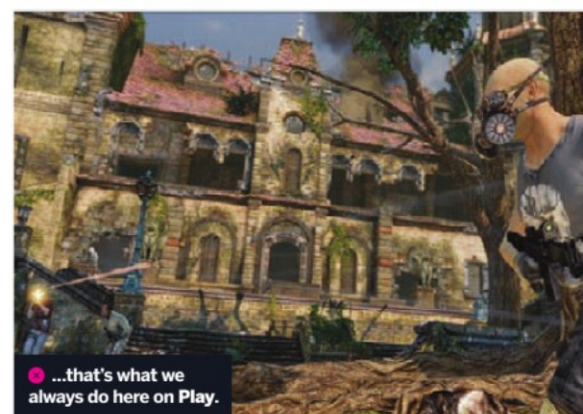
Remember to complain about lag whenever you die...



...or moan about how stupid the other person's gamertag is...

PICK YOUR POISON

The many faces of multiplayer IN ADDITION TO 5 vs 5 Team Deathmatch, there's also a new Three Team Deathmatch, which pits three teams of two against each other. Multiplayer is also served up in split-screen and 3D flavours, with split-screen even enabling each player to sign into their PSN account so no-one loses out on levelling up. We don't want to say 'they've thought of everything!' but, you know. They have.



...that's what we always do here on Play.

PREVIEW

✓ You are not alone, I am here with you

Mercifully, you won't have to try to survive Banoi's unfortunate outbreak all on your own – *Dead Island* offers you the chance to send a shout out over PSN to any of your mates online, inviting them to enter your game and lend a hand. They'll appear wherever you are in your personal progression through the game's story, bringing with them any skills and weapons they're currently boasting from their own.



✓ These zombies can think! Well, sorta...

Doing away with the 'Zombies: Fast or Slow?' argument, Techland offers both – some shamblers here, some speedsters there. Taking a leaf from *Left 4 Dead*'s book, there are specialised zombies such as 'Suiciders', who try to get close before exploding. As if that weren't bad enough, the undead can also use basic weapons – being chased by something wielding a bludgeon and out to suck down your eyeballs is a heart-pounding experience.



✓ Taking time for the arts

We'll draw this to your attention now, since you'll probably be spending too much time fleeing for your life to notice it later – *Dead Island* is a beautiful game. Part of this is down to the very nature of the art direction itself, a disarming juxtaposition between lush forests, golden sands and relaxing holiday scenes, with hordes of bloodied, cannibalistic dead... things. The two are blended brilliantly, causing you to be more on edge – the usual visual and thematic developer tricks to denote 'safe' areas aren't applicable here.



✓ Gorgeous view, shame about the undead

The first thing that strikes you about the (fictional) Banoi island is the scale of it. At some point after waking up to a zombie alarm clock and making your way onto the ruined beaches, you'll find 30 seconds to catch your breath and notice what looks to be a city in the distance. Turns out, that's not just eye candy across the bay – it's a fully interactive part of the game world that you can eventually make your way over to. Look the other way, and you'll see huge mountain ranges. Banoi is big enough to send *Just Cause's* Rico Rodriguez running for his helicopter just to get around.

✗ Our ears! Please not our ears!

A bunch of uppity flesh-chompers isn't the only thing that's horrifying in *Dead Island* – the game's voice acting is currently bad enough to give you nightmares, too. Banoi is placed near Papua New Guinea, so it's actually quite cool to hear some Aussie intonations for geographical authenticity, rather than everyone sounding like brick-jawed Americans. The problem comes with the ridiculous lines uttered by player characters midway through kerb-stomping zombies. The gangsta rapper 'Tank'-class character is particularly bad, screaming "YOU DEAAAAAD NOW, BITCH!" every five seconds in an accent that would make Mr T feel ashamed, along with other clichéd lines so bad that we'd get brought up on hate crime charges if we repeated them in print. With months until release, we really hope Techland spends some of that time getting better actors into the recording booth.



✓ Cherry ride, one careful zombie owner

Though the main story is designed to be linear, a wealth of side-quests allows you to open up the game. Early on, you can try to rescue a man trapped in a car, assailed by zombies. Succeed, and he opens a tool bench where you can start upgrading weapons much earlier than if you fail. Other quests provide you with vehicles or shortcuts to traverse the huge island faster. There's something immensely satisfying about saving a dude's life and getting a sweet ride out of it. That's good karma, right there.

Techland is working on *Dead Island* as well as *Call Of Juarez: The Cartel*. They must like being busy. Check deadislandgame.com for the progress.



RELEASE DATE: TBA

Dead Island

PS3 Six reasons why you should care and one why you shouldn't...

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's the game everyone's talking about!
- Co-op, melee orientated, sounds like a party.
- Or was talking about up until about two months ago.
- Not one we'd go to, though. Well, depends on the music.

READ ME

Imagine *Borderlands* without guns and with zombies. Or *Left 4 Dead 2* without Valve and with *Borderlands*. Or just imagine *DEAD ISLAND*.

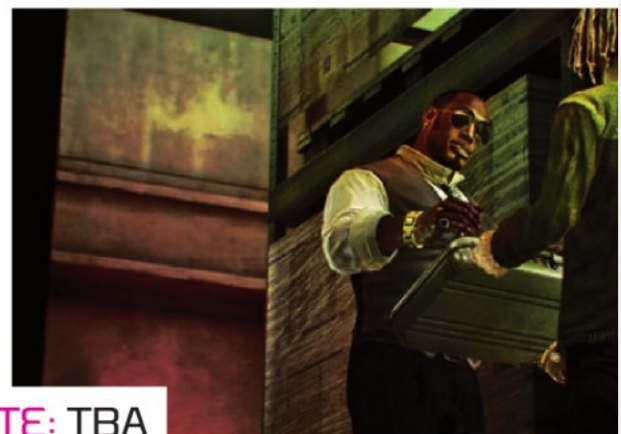
✓ Arts and crafts

Thankfully, you're not without options to help ensure your survival. The emphasis is largely on melee combat – you may find a handgun here or there, but for the most part you'll have to make do with whatever's to hand. With ammo at a minimum, you'll need to think outside the box too, such as shooting a gas canister to take out a crowd, or time the explosion of Suiciders to engulf their revenant chums in unholy fire. The desperation of your weaponry options only makes the game all the more frightening.





● You get Frank, you also get those awful-but-brilliant one-liners, too.



RELEASE DATE: TBA

Dead Rising 2: Off The Record

West Side Story



"This is the fan's version of the game." So says Jason Leigh, executive producer of *Dead Rising 2: Off The Record*, disarming onlooking press of their most powerful weapon – cynicism. We've just seen a trailer that asks the question of what Frank West would have done had he been at the centre of Fortune City's zombie outbreak?

The answer, says Frank, is 'everything'. A washed-up has-been who has exhausted his last drop of celebrity from the Willamette crisis in the original *Dead Rising*, the reporter has wound up at Fortune City's *Terror Is Reality* TV show. With a single-strap leotard, Frank destroys the zombies around him for points – throwing them into grinders, setting off fire traps, bowling through them all with spinning clotheslines. A sombre cut-scene after winning sees Frank in the changing rooms next to a contestant who complains that he feels like a sell-out. Frank's reaction says it all – he feels the same way.

Yet this isn't Emo Rising. As he zips into his reporter gear and heads to the exit, Frank stumbles upon a chat between TK and Brandon, one of *Dead Rising 2*'s psychopaths. It

turns out Brandon's only threat to Fortune City wasn't just the odour of his unwashed hippy jumpers.

Saying more would ruin it but what we wanted to illustrate is this – *Off The Record* isn't a retread through old assets with a familiar face. "We've had a lot of fun with things like additions to the world, like figuring out where are key areas where we can surprise the player," Leigh told us. "They turn a corner and it's like a fresh experience now. But then it gets bigger than that once we do things like the new area, where you're walking along and it's not just a poster on the wall, it's, 'wow, there's this giant thing there that I get to go in and explore.'"

Just to further disarm any more cynical thoughts, there will be a new area. And a new mode. And new weapons, combo cards, survivors, psychopaths and more. Capcom Vancouver doesn't spill the beans today but weirdly, it's the alternate view on old favourites that's most appetising. There's even a teaser of Katy's backpack and Game Boy Advance on the floor during the demo. We're also told about the return of Chuck Greene, without it



● The trusty head stomp – always one of our favoured moves.



● The photography mechanic from the original *Dead Rising* has returned.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- New psychopaths, survivors, weapons, combo cards and story.
- Fully integrated co-op à la *Case West* starring Frank and Chuck.

- A new area, although Capcom Vancouver wouldn't tell us what it was.
- Well, they did say, "it's not a casino." But that's not really telling.



● Frank's moves, such as the spinning clothesline and gorilla press are back.

being explained how he'll be brought into Frank West's vision of Fortune City, and the two will team up in co-op. Think *Case West's* surprisingly strong co-op rather than *Dead Rising 2's* clumsy effort for how awesome this could be. It all stems from Capcom Vancouver's knowledge of what makes *Dead Rising* tick.

"When we broke it down and started to look at some of the pillars, it's got key things such as sandboxing on the clock," said Leigh. "It was very unique when it came out for that. The density of the world – having so many zombies in one place at one time. Anything and everything as a weapon. I think there were about 140 weapons in *Dead Rising 1*. We took that to 300 weapons in *Dead Rising 2*. We're putting more in *Off The Record* as well."

Leigh laughs when we ask him if he anticipated sitting here, all these years later, as part of Capcom when the team originally worked on *Dead Rising 2*. "I certainly didn't anticipate that we were going to do something like *Off The Record* and bring Frank back into the mix. But certainly as we were completing *Dead Rising 2* we thought, 'wow, we're making a successful product, we can actually work very well with a Japanese company'. It was a very easy decision to join forces. And this is the first of many exciting things we'll have coming out of our studio."

Capcom Vancouver, formerly Blue Castle Games, is working on *Off The Record*. Capcomvancouver.com is where you should click for more info.

READ ME

Covering the Fortune City zombie outbreak from a fresh angle, *Dead Rising 2: Off The Record* sees the incident through the eyes of *Dead Rising's* hero Frank West.



● Frank looks superfly in his wrestling gear.

NEW MODE EXPLAINED! NOT REALLY

Because this bit didn't fit into the main text

JASON LEIGH WOULDN'T tell us about the new mode but we asked him why it wasn't in *Dead Rising 2*. "Part of it was just what could be fit into it. I'm not sure that all the ideas were there, originally, when we were working on *Dead Rising 2*. But now we've done *Dead Rising 2*, we could start thinking about what we would change or add. So I guess this wouldn't have fit into making *Dead Rising 2*. *Dead Rising 2* was a three-year production, just to get that game out the door. Here, with the platform of the game, we could build upon it."



PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: JUNE

There are plenty of combos for MMA fans to master but *Supremacy* will still be accessible to more casual gamers.

Supremacy MMA



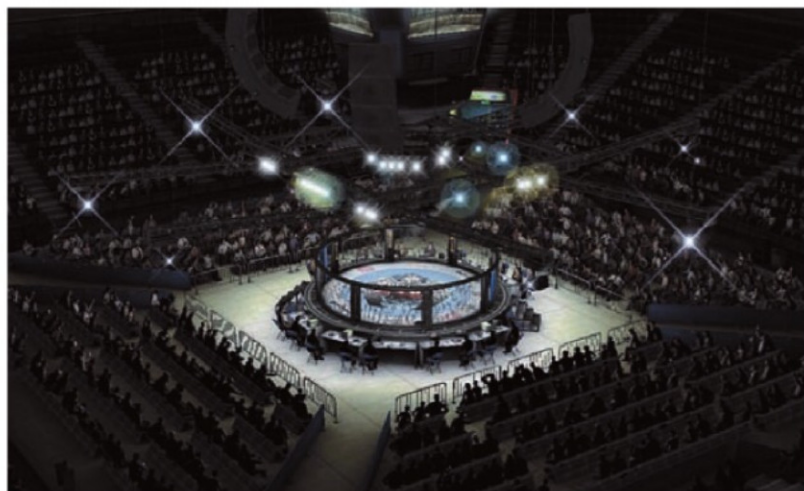
In their own words, here are five reasons why you should start giving a damn

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Very easy to learn, very tough to master with a ton of combos.
- You can break your opponent's limbs with crushing finishing moves.
- Each fighter has their own real-life story in their first language.
- It's the first MMA game to ever feature female combatants.



Female fighters will feature for the first time in an MMA game.



READ ME

Supremacy MMA is entering a competitive market and will be going head-to-head with the likes of THQ's *UFC Undisputed* series and EA Sports *MMA*.

'Not Sexpots'

BY: Michele 'Diablitá' Gutierrez, Felice 'Lil Bulldog' Herrig
WHO: Female MMA fighters

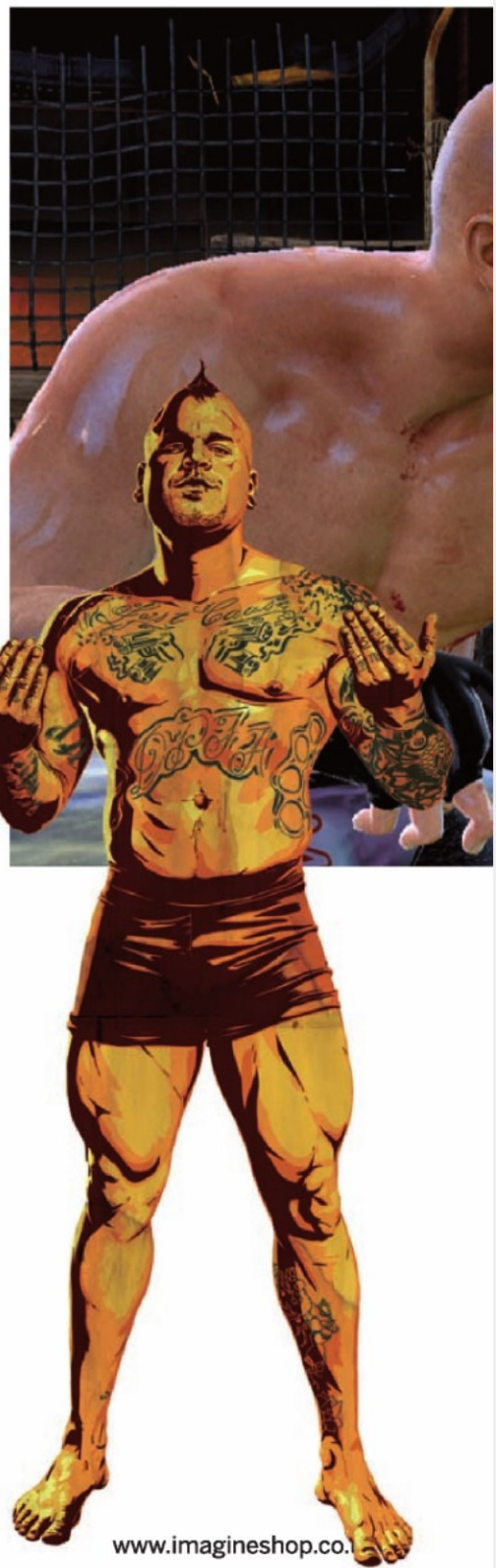
Gutierrez: "We're definitely not portrayed as sexpots or anything like that. Our images are exactly what we are, who we are and what we are all about. If people want to say that we're sexy or sex objects, it's because that's the way they're seeing us, but we're not putting ourselves out there like that. 505 Games isn't putting us out there like that. Our images in the videogame are exactly like how we fight."

Herrig: "We didn't have so much of an influence in terms of the videogame itself but for our characters, we got to kind of tweak what we looked like. Michele didn't have tattoos in the videogame, but she does in reality, so she had them change it. We did the voiceovers, and they had it scripted out, but we were kind of uncomfortable with the original script. It kind of made us look unreal, like they were having us say dirty things, like we're being mean to each other, ghetto girls. We're not actually like that, we're both professional fighters, we have respect for our opponents. It was more like specific words, such as 'bitch' or 'fuck'. That's not really us, we don't talk like that. We just didn't want to be portrayed in a way that isn't us. They fixed it right away."

Real Stories

BY: Felice 'Lil Bulldog' Herrig
WHO: Female MMA fighter

"I like that it's not just secluded to fighters who've already made it in the sport. Fighters start off fighting because of the love for the sport, the glitz and the glam takes away from the love of sport. In this game, there's all walks of life in it. Like Jens Pulver, he's a legend in MMA and he's in the videogame, and then there's other guys who less people know, but it doesn't mean that one day they won't know them. It's nice to show the other guys that it's not just the UFC fighters that exist out there. You had to start somewhere and not everybody starts in the UFC. It's also the first MMA videogame to feature real-life female fighters, and it also features real-life fighter stories. Each fighter has their real-life story, not just a made-up movie kind of thing."



www.imagineshop.co.

It's Brutal

BY: Michele 'Diablita' Gutierrez
WHO: Female MMA fighter

"I like how realistic it is with the wounds and stuff, how specific it is. Like you get a little bump, then it grows, get hit there in the same spot and it breaks open, bleeding a little bit. It's very, very detailed. It's amazing just to watch, not even to play, like watch two other people and go "Crap! That's awesome!" I mean, they scanned the bottom of our feet, so the bottom of my foot is in there, exactly like it should be. It's very detailed. The brutality – it is brutal, but it makes for a very, very exciting videogame. You can pick where you want to fight – you can fight in an arena or, you know, a prison or a strip club. There's different scenery, which is exciting, and the main thing is it's an easy game to play. It's not hard with the controller, it's simple."



● Each fighter will have their own real-life stories.

It's Like Tekken

BY: Ricci Rukavina
WHO: Creative director at Kung Fu Factory

"We wanted to go towards a more arcade influence, so like *Virtua Fighter*, *Tekken*, wrestling games. That's what inspired a lot of the gameplay and design. Being faster, having gameplay and strategy tied into what you're doing with different fighting styles. It's much more fighting game-based than your traditional sim. Like any good fighting game you can mash and do cool things, but then you can get really good and go toe-to-toe, with long matches where there's lots of blocking and parrying, both of us looking for an opening to get in and do massive damage. It's ridiculously fun, almost anyone who gets their hands on it will see that. If people love MMA, we think they'll like our game, but if they just love fighting games or playing a fun game, it'll be easy for them to get into it."



● Wounds and injuries will be incredibly realistic.

It's Highly Aggressive

BY: Ricci Rukavina
WHO: Creative director at Kung Fu Factory

"Being aggressive as a fighter is pretty fun, and the different styles matching up against each other is cool. Once you get enough adrenaline, you can use it to perform more damaging moves. Mastering ground gameplay versus strike gameplay based on the different characters' styles is really cool. We're also introducing these stories about where the fighters come from. It's another way to expand the single-player experience. It's also where the name *Supremacy MMA* comes from, how these fighters have a story that's pretty meaningful. We've also got an XP system, where all the shots and throws I'm able to land level me up. You'll be able to level up different steps based on traditional styles, so karate is all based on belts – red belt, green belt and so on."



Supremacy MMA is an arcade-style mixed martial arts title. It's being made by Kung Fu Factory and published by 505 Games. For more info check out www.supremacymma.com

PREVIEW



1

CREATURE COMFORTS

The level opens with the player character – a young boy in a Daz-white shawl and tattoos decorating his forearms – creeping up on the sleeping creature named Trico. Attempting to wake the gentle beast by tugging its ears has no effect, but a short shout sees the animal stretch, shake and rear itself to full height. Trico is at once alien and familiar – an amalgam of canine, feline and avian parts that combine to form something that could have walked straight out of a Greek myth. It's certainly cute, but also threatening in its stature and power. Lucky for you, though, because it's in utilising Trico's size that you'll traverse the levels.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

The Last Guardian

Team Ico spirits us away to a strange and unfamiliar land

PS3

With *Ico* and *Shadow Of The Colossus*, Sony's Team Ico sent a very profound message to the industry. It was that games could be more than exhilarating or a means of mere escapism – they could also be evocative, eloquent and meaningful. *SOTC* even featured in the film *Reign Over Me* as a means of overcoming loss and developing human companionship.

Five years on and Team Ico is back to prove once again that games can be about a great deal more than shooting, racing or fighting. That lengthy dev time has been spent creating what looks to be one of the most beautiful PS3 games we've seen, both aesthetically and thematically. Let's take a look at one of the early levels of the game, recently revealed by the Japanese studio.



2

IT TAKES TWO BABY

The first challenge the boy and Trico must overcome is climbing a large room decorated with ornate balconies and passages. To do this the young boy must attract Trico's attention using bait (a large cask containing a luminescent liquid). By climbing a set of stairs and

making his way to a balcony on the opposite side of the room the boy is able to throw the tasty snack onto a platform below, causing Trico to lift his upper body onto the outcropping, creating an improvised ladder in the process and allowing the boy to proceed.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's being developed by the wonderful Team Ico.
- We're pretty sure it's going to look absolutely gorgeous.
- You'll be playing as a vulnerable young boy.
- So you'll need to work closely with Trico, a cat-bird-eagle thing, to advance.

READ ME

Shadow Of The Colossus and *Ico* never received the acclaim they deserved from gamers. Make sure you check them out when they are released in stunning HD on PS3 in the near future.

GIVE US A CLUE What can we learn from the storyboards and concept art of The Last Guardian?



Trico really likes to have a good climb...



...but can also be a bit lazy.

3

YOUR PROTECTOR

While you were a bodyguard in *Ico*, and an aggressor in *SOTC*, here you're neither. You're a vulnerable young boy, too small and too young to fight for yourself, which is why you need to be careful as you enter the next portion of the level alone. Patrolling the stone corridors is one of the game's elaborately armoured guards. Stealth is the order of the day, with the young lad crouching behind a low wall and attempting to sneak past. If seen you'll need to run for your life and look for an escape route, or you could attempt to lead the enemy to Trico who'll teach your foe a thing or two about picking on his mate.



4

THROUGH THICK AND THIN

Trico isn't there just so you can set him on your enemies or clamber across his feathery hide whenever it suits you. He's more than just a game mechanic. The young boy's – and therefore the player's – relationship with Trico forms the very core of *The Last Guardian*, as it will develop and progress alongside the game. Trico's mannerisms and expressions will subtly change as he becomes ever more familiar and loyal to the boy, their closeness communicated in scenes such as that in which the boy huddles under Trico's wing for a sleep in the midday sun. Team Ico wants you to consider Trico a friend, not just a tool you use to traverse levels.



AN ANIMATE BEING

The Last Guardian looks to be one of the most emotionally sophisticated games we've seen, and it's thanks to Team Ico's mastery over the art of animation. Actions are performed with a subtlety that imbues them with far deeper meaning – the boy kicking as he's carried away by a guard or struggling to carry a barrel instantly communicating his vulnerability and youth. Trico's weight and power, meanwhile, is revealed at the end of the level when he pounces up to the same section as the boy so they can progress, but collapses sections of the floor as he does so. Small touches like these give Trico a tangible sense of place and being in the world.

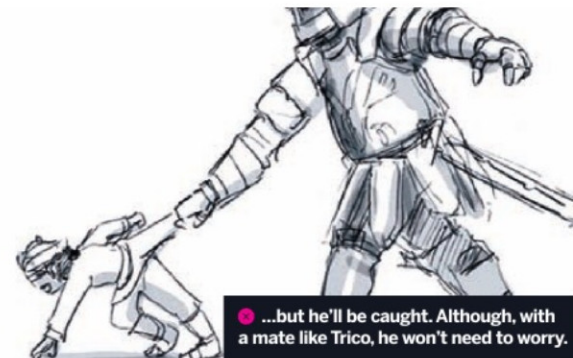
5



● He also enjoys a good vigorous swim.



● The young boy is going to have to be crafty if he's to escape the guards...



● ...but he'll be caught. Although, with a mate like Trico, he won't need to worry.

PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: 2012

Prototype 2

One New York Sinatra wouldn't want to be a part of



The original *Prototype*, for all it's small but nagging faults, was nevertheless an impressive piece of work that managed to squeeze a great many ideas into the concept of the open-world superhero game. Radical didn't just supply you with a bunch of cool powers and allow you to run amok in its re-creation of New York City, it also attempted an involving narrative, fluid and enjoyable parkour, sections of stealth gameplay, vehicle-to-vehicle combat and a great deal more.

But it was in attempting to cram so much into one package that the overall polish of *Prototype* suffered,

the end result being a collection of good ideas, but no particularly great ones. There was the faint promise of something special, but the disparate gameplay elements felt too undernourished – as if they were samples of something that could be bigger and better.

So, in 2012, Radical intends to return to its franchise and show that while the first game may have felt too literal a reflection of its title, this sequel has moved on from the prototype stage. It's going to be proof of concept.

Prototype 2 is being developed by Radical Entertainment. For more details head to www.prototypegame.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ Graphically it's more polished than the first game.
- ❑ You can smash up a tank with its own turret.
- ❑ Running up walls is still incredibly fun.
- ❑ You have Spider-Man powers! Kind of...

READ ME

Although the original *Prototype*'s Alex Mercer wore his hood up, Heller sports no such headwear. We think Radical should give him a stovepipe hat.

A NEW HERO

When we first heard that Alex Mercer was going to be the bad guy in *Prototype 2* we hoped that we were still going to control him. Yes, we like being the bad guy. But we've been denied this guilty pleasure. In *Prototype* you play as Sergeant James Heller, a grieving war veteran who lost his entire family to the Blacklight virus and then goes and gets infected himself by Mercer. He doesn't die, but mutates, and seems eager to embrace his newfound powers and go on a rampage of violent destruction. Why has Mercer gone evil? We're not sure... when we left him in the first *Prototype* he was cleaning up the remnants of a mostly recovering New York.

SUGAR-FREE NEW YORK

The setting for *Prototype 2* is once again Manhattan Island, but here it's been renamed as 'New York Zero' (was Radical at all concerned with the somewhat discomforting Ground Zero connotations?). The city has been split into three separate zones, colour coded red, yellow and green. The red zone is the area worst affected by the Blacklight virus; the yellow zone is where the refugees who have escaped the red zone reside; and the green zone is a film starring Matt Damon. Oh wait, sorry, the green zone is where the rich and affluent live, safe from the Blacklight virus. By splitting NYZ into three separate, distinct areas, Radical hopes to give each a unique sense of personality and character.



A LUST FOR POWER

Heller will share most of the abilities that Mercer wields in the first game, including the blades, parkour and whipfist power. However, the musculomass power, which upgraded Mercer's strength, has been dropped. Replacing it is a tendril-based power, the slender tentacles used to string your targets together in a mesh of thick, black webbing. If that sounds like Spider-Man to you, then you're not too far off. Although Heller can use this power to tear his opponents apart limb by the limb, *Prototype 2* also allows players to swap between two powers instantly with a press of the **RT** button, meaning you can perform some deadly combination attacks.

BIG SCREEN



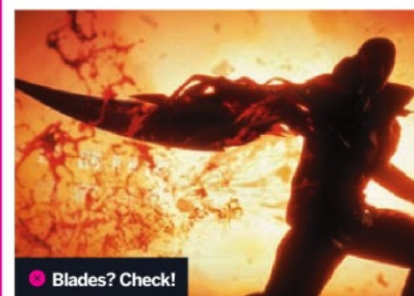
CURSE OF THE DISAPPOINTING SEQUELS

We've been let down by a lot of sequels recently. *Crysis 2*'s poor AI and buggy code tarnished an otherwise great experience; *Dragon Age II*, while still enjoyable, lacked the expansiveness of its predecessor; and *The Force*

Unleashed II was a poor imitation of the game it succeeded. Hopefully, this spreading case of badsequelitis won't infect *Prototype 2*. This is the one chance for Radical to prove just how impressive the ideas in the original game were.

JAZZ HANDS

What can you turn your hands into in *Prototype 2*?



● Blades? Check!



● Weird tentacles? Check!



● Kittens? Nope.

PREVIEW

MARDUK

First Appearance: *Tekken 4*

Info: All brutality and no subtlety, Marduk gets up close and then tries to snatch his opponents with Tackle (half-circle back + kick). From here, he can either pound their face or grab them by the ankle and throw them over his shoulder. Even better, the EX version sees him grab his opponent, run to the far side of the screen and slam them against the wall. Perfect for tagging in your partner to continue the combo and lay the smack down.

KEN

First Appearance: *Street Fighter*

Info: Another character who's kept his *SFIV* tricks, Ken's combos are also the same, with jabs linking into medium kick. Yet the combos don't have to be complicated, with *Street Fighter* characters benefitting from the introduction of *Tekken*'s juggle system. That means being able to continue hitting airborne opponents. Which means as soon as you hit anyone in the air, land and... Shoryuken! Sigh.

RYU

First Appearance: *Street Fighter*

Info: The iconic character returns from his latest outing in *Street Fighter IV* almost untouched, except he now has his Joudan Kick from *Marvel Vs Capcom 3*. Ryu makes the most use of the new game mechanics. If you spend a bar of your super meter to tag cancel Shoryuken, for example, your partner comes into the match to finish the combo. Which will clearly be Ken online. And lead straight into another Shoryuken.

RELEASE DATE: TBA

Street Fighter X Tekken

Tekken it to the next level



There were millions of different directions we could have gone in with this *Street Fighter X Tekken* preview. And by 'millions', we actually mean 'two'. Do we go super in-depth or keep the coverage light and fluffy?

The answer is both. Here, we have the light coverage. The blue circle there? That points towards the heavier stuff on our blog. Have fun!

Street Fighter X Tekken is being developed by Capcom and is in no way related to *Tekken X Street Fighter*. Nope.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



Street Fighter takes on *Tekken* for the first time.



It's also packing a two-on-two tag mechanic.



Tekken characters have been changed to fit in.



It's fast, it's fun, it's furious, it's flipping fantastic.

READ ME

SF producer Yoshinori Ono says *Tekken* producer Katsuhiro Harada hasn't even seen the game. "You'll have seen it before him!" he claims. Awesome.

READ MORE!

If you really want to know what this is about, along with launchers, juggles and combo info, check out our mammoth, 3,500 word breakdown here: <http://bit.ly/g33cHq>

KAZUYA

First Appearance: *Tekken*

Info: The combo king of *Tekken*, Kazuya uses all the new techniques in *Street Fighter X Tekken* to devastating effect. He has a double punch mapped to quarter-circle back and... well, punch. If you hit tag when the first punch connects (providing you have the meter to do so), his partner will run in as Kazuya hits with the second punch, so his partner can carry on the combo. Ouch. Better yet, the partner can go into a long combo and tag back. Punished.

NINA

First Appearance: *Tekken*

Info: While they have no projectiles, all the *Tekken* characters except Marduk have a way of getting past them. Nina has a command step, which is half-circle towards + kick. This puts her below fireballs and she slinks forward, going into her chain throws from command step if she's in range. It means *Street Fighter* characters can't just spam projectiles.

CHUN-LI

First Appearance: *Street Fighter II*

Info: One of the few characters to have received tweaks since *Street Fighter IV*, Chun-Li now has her Lightning Legs move changed from mashing kick to the far more precise half-circle forward and kick. Her combos have also received an overhaul (EX Lightning Legs into EX Lightning Legs no longer works, for example), so Chun-Li fans will have to spend some time in the training room lab figuring out her new tricks.

FIRST LOOK

KING

First Appearance: *Tekken*

Info: One of the more complicated characters, King has a mixture of unorthodox moves. His counters, redundant in *Tekken*, now work versus air moves (back + all three punches) or ground moves (back + all three kicks), making it easier for King to deal with any opponents who insist on jumping at him. Add some command throws and he's one of the deadliest characters in the game as well as being the snazziest.

GUILE

First Appearance: *Street Fighter II*

Info: Some characters can 'hold' special moves to do an EX version or a super. In Guile's case, it's his Sonic Boom that becomes Sonic Hurricane. Holding down the Sonic Boom sees Guile go into the start-up animation, which can cause opponents to jump on reaction. When they do, just let go of the now EX Sonic Boom as they fall into it. Frustration guaranteed, you can lock opponents out for the entire round with this.

ABEL

First Appearance: *Street Fighter IV*

Info: Abel has a risk/reward game when knocked down, either going for Marseille Roll or Tornado Throw to get out of trouble. Like every other character in *Street Fighter X Tekken*, he has another way to evade danger. When knocked down, Abel can spend one meter tagging his opponent in before he gets to his feet, avoiding the awkward situation of rising into his opponent's offence altogether. It means there are no breaks in pace. Ever. Well, at least not until the match ends.

BOB

First Appearance: *Tekken 6*

Info: He can roll along the ground, he can smack you with his belly, he can also stand back and smack *Street Fighter* opponents using his great set of normal moves that put even Chun-Li and Guile to shame. Probably the most *Street Fighter*-esque character in terms of normal moves and proof that producer Yoshinori Ono can translate the weirdness of Namco Bandai's eccentric cast into a *Street Fighter* world without any problems.

PREVIEW

FIRST LOOK



PICK ON SOMEONE YOUR OWN SIZE

"As a developer, what we want to do is deliver something new to players," says Shimoda. "This large-scale, dramatic piece of gaming that they've never experienced before." CyberConnect2 and Capcom seem well on the way to achieving this goal. In the demo we're shown Asura battles a planetary-sized being named Wyzen. There are some on-rails sections, a lot of QTEs and cinematic gameplay that certainly looks impressive, but we wonder whether it will all feel a little too much like watching a cut-scene? Still, there's some mind-blowing action occurring, with Asura finishing the battle with a flurry of fiery punches to the tip of Wyzen's massive finger, causing him to burst into flames.

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

It can't be denied that there are many inspirations evident in *Asura's Wrath* and its gameplay, ranging from CyberConnect2's own *Naruto* games through to animes like *Fist Of The North Star* and *Dragon Ball Z*. Oh wait... what's that Tsuchiya? Apparently it can be denied: "So far, the reaction has been 'oh you guys are trying to do something different here'. For the most part, we haven't had too many comparisons yet." Matsuyama is more open to the influence of CyberConnect2's past work: "We've been making games for 15 years and all that has influenced what we've put into *Asura's Wrath*. Of course, there are people who worked on *Naruto* games who are also working on *Asura's Wrath* [laughs]."

RELEASE DATE: TBC

Asura's Wrath

Both this guy and Kratos really need some anger therapy



If we were to sum *Asura's Wrath* up in one word it would be 'insane'. Or 'crazy'. Maybe 'outrageous'. Okay, that's actually three words, but attempting to describe *Asura's Wrath* demands such superfluity, given how exaggerated and over the top the game is itself. The action we saw at Captivate makes *Bayonetta* look about as

dramatic as an episode of *Gardeners' World*. We spoke to CyberConnect2 CEO Hiroshi Matsuyama, producer Kazuhiro Tsuchiya and director Seiji Shimoda about attempting to out-*Bayonetta* *Bayonetta*.

Asura's Wrath is being developed by CyberConnect2. Check Capcom's website for more details at www.capcom-europe.com



LAND OF THE RISING SUN

CyberConnect2 wants *Asura's Wrath* to feel totally unique, and has opted for a setting inspired by both mythological Japan and sci-fi – something that vaguely recalls the work Ninja Theory did on *Enslaved*. Is Tsuchiya worried that the Japanese inspiration could bleed through to the gameplay? "Does this game feel too Japanese? Does it look too Japanese? My answer to that is yes, we're Japanese creatives," he says. "We're going to put our Japanese sensibilities into this game. But our goal is to deliver something with global appeal. It will be informed by our tastes, but we're making a new experience that anyone can enjoy."

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It shares some of the same dev team as the *Naruto* games.
- It's absolutely bonkers and is arguably even crazier than *Bayonetta*.
- This is the angriest protagonist we've seen since Kratos.
- You have to go head-to-head against a giant finger. Obviously.

READ ME

Developer CyberConnect2 is predominantly known for its work on the *Naruto* series, but it also produces the *.hack//* series.

THE LATEST ON... So many games, so very little time



THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM

Publisher: Bethesda **Developer:** Bethesda
ETA: November **Format:** PS3

NOVEMBER IS A write-off. Don't expect an edition of *Play* that month because we'll be too busy exploring the Northern plains of Skyrim to put together a mag. Bethesda's latest entry into the *Elder Scrolls* franchise looks like it could be one of the greatest RPGs ever – seriously, we're going to lose hours of our life to this.



ANARCHY REIGNS

Publisher: Sega **Developer:** Platinum Games
ETA: Q3 2011 **Format:** PS3

PLATINUM'S FIRST ATTEMPT at a multiplayer game looks likely to be just as eccentric and extreme as everything else that's been released by the Japanese powerhouse thus far. If Platinum can marry its tight combat mechanics to frenetic multiplayer mayhem, this will be high on our must-play lists later this year.



MASS EFFECT 3

Publisher: EA **Developer:** BioWare
ETA: Q4 2011 **Format:** PS3

WHEN WE FIRST saw the trailer for the final instalment in the *Mass Effect* series, the noise we made was like the sound a small gerbil would make if you sellotaped it to a fan and then turned it on. Hopefully the noises Hollywood composer Clint Mansell makes for the soundtrack will be less upsetting to the ears.



SORCERY

Publisher: Sony **Developer:** The Workshop
ETA: Q3 2011 **Format:** PS3

ANNOUNCED LAST YEAR *Sorcery* looked to be one of the more innovative uses of Move, but we've heard little since so we'll make some stuff up: you play as Mickey Mouse, you control an army of broomsticks and you have to battle Harry Potter. David Blaine also features, but all he can do is sit in a block of ice.



STREET FIGHTER IV: ARCADE EDITION

Publisher: Capcom **Developer:** Capcom
ETA: TBC 2011 **Format:** PS3

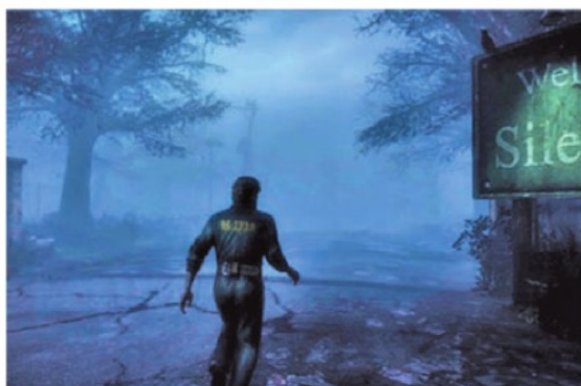
YES, IT'S ANOTHER version of *Street Fighter*. This arcade port contains Evil Ryu, Oni, Yun and Yang as extra characters; offers an improved Replay channel; and a free update released for *Super Street Fighter IV* will mean both versions can play together online.



BIOSHOCK: INFINITE

Publisher: 2K Games **Developer:** Irrational Games
ETA: 2012 **Format:** PS3

WE LOVED BIOSHOCK 2, but this is the sequel to *BioShock* we really wanted. Sure, it's not set in Rapture, but this game has more in common with the original *BioShock* than *BioShock 2*, and that's thanks to Ken Levine. Infinite will further explore his work with narrative, emergent play, and player empowerment.



SILENT HILL: DOWNPOUR

Publisher: Konami **Developer:** Vatra Games
ETA: Q4 2011 **Format:** PS3

RAIN IS SCARY, right? It's all wet and... Okay, so it's not that scary, but it'll be interesting to see how Vatra makes water a compelling gameplay element. With Akira Yamaoka not composing the music, the new composer will have his work out creating music as inventive and unnerving as Yamaoka's.



DEVIL MAY CRY

Publisher: Capcom **Developer:** Ninja Theory
ETA: TBC **Format:** PS3

OKAY, LET'S JUST get it out of the way before we move on: the new Dante looks like a reject from the *Twilight* saga. He's crap. But our real concern with this unnecessary reboot lies not in the way it looks, but the way it's going to play. Ninja Theory is great at story, but deep, tactical brawling gameplay? Not so much.



MAX PAYNE 3

Publisher: Rockstar **Developer:** Rockstar
ETA: TBC **Format:** PS3

LOOK AT MAX! Turns out he's not going to be a bald flabby-gut for the entire game. That occurs later. We also know that *Max Payne 3* will feature a cover system and will contain multiplayer. Rockstar popularised the concept of bullet time – can it also be the first developer to get it to work in multiplayer?

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PLAY. Reviews

点検

Playing bad games so you don't have to

Including: Michael Jackson: The Experience – bad but in quite a good way /// YET ANOTHER Naruto game /// A so-so addition to the SOCOM franchise



- 80 Portal 2 PS3
- 82 Mortal Kombat PS3
- 84 SOCOM: Special Forces PS3
- 86 Operation Flashpoint: Red River PS3
- 88 Virtua Tennis 4 PS3
- 89 Patapon 3 PSP
- 90 Naruto Shippuden: Kizuna Drive PSP
- 90 Michael Jackson: The Experience PS3



80 Portal 2 PS3

The puzzle half of Portal Kombat



82 Mortal Kombat PS3

The violent half of Portal Kombat



88 Virtua Tennis 4 PS3

Nothing to do with Portal Kombat

review panel



Ian Dransfield Reviewed: Portal 2

While playing *Portal 2*, Ian let out an embarrassing laugh. As everyone (by that, we mean over four people) in the office was watching, Ian had to explain. Mild joke spoiler alert for those yet to play *Portal 2* – “I’m doing the tutorial right and it says press **X** to speak, but instead it makes you jump.” Cue over four blank faces and a socially awkward situation. This is what it’s like playing games in a busy office. But then you’d know this if [obvious Facebook plug] you followed us on Facebook at Facebook.com/PlayMagazineUK! [obvious Facebook plug].

currently playing:
Portal 2



Jon Gordon Reviewed: Mortal Kombat

After reviewing *Mortal Kombat*, Ryan did his usual thing of asking what Jon thought of it. “Yeah, it’s okay,” Jon said, nodding his head. Imagine a world without word counts. This is what you’d get for an entire review, with a boxout that said “multiplayer is okay” and a verdict that might say “yeah, pretty good” before arriving at a score. We could finish work at 10am and get home in time to watch daytime TV and eat baked beans straight out the pot, like we’ve threatened to ever since we finished uni. Ahhh. What a wonderful life that would be.

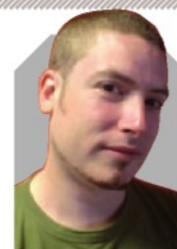
currently playing:
FIFA 11



Chris McMahon Reviewed: Virtua Tennis 4

Chris has lofty ambitions in life but the one we admire most, or rather the one we know is impossible and therefore is encouraged for the sake of cheap laughs, is his teabag trick. No, it’s nothing rude. Chris is adamant that he can place a teabag on top of his mug so it rests flat, then pour water through the teabag without it falling into the mug. If you can’t picture it, then save yourself the bother. It’s impossible. “I’ll do it one day!” Chris says, as another soggy teabag falls to its doom in a pit of boiling water. That’s right, Chris. Don’t stop believing!

currently playing:
Red Faction: Battlegrounds



Dan Howdle Reviewed: Operation Flashpoint: Red River

Dan isn’t here, so it’s the classic awkward oh-no-what-do-we-write-about-someone-who-isn’t-here moment. Go too far, he’ll be offended and bring it up weeks after the mag hits the shelves when he finally gets round to reading this bit, or when someone tells him about it (plea: don’t tell him about it). Don’t go far enough, readers are bored. What do we do? Let’s not do anything. We’ve almost filled this space with general talk. Almost there. Just a little bit more. Stay with us now, we’re almost done... and there! Phew.

currently playing:
Gears Of War 3 beta

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Portal 2

We're making a note here:
HUGE SUCCESS



Portal 2 is so good it almost makes us want to write one of those ridiculously self-indulgent demi-reviews that misses the entire point of why we're talking about a game in the first place. You know the kind – you've read them *elsewhere*, and they're always so far up their own backside it's hard to tell where the... no. We mustn't get into that. Be the bigger publication, **Play**. Just talk about *Portal 2* – because it's a game that's going to be talked about for a long time to come.

Within 30 seconds of starting the game you'll realise it's something different. As Wheatley – the little personality sphere voiced oh-so-wonderfully by professional bank advertiser Stephen Merchant – almost immediately makes

you laugh. A real laugh. A belly laugh. A combination of good delivery, good writing

and the fact *Portal 2* is lampooning the very tutorial process you're going through sets the experience up nicely. Brilliantly. Wonderfully. And while you'll rarely get that initial pang of joy again through the eight or so hours it takes to play through, you'll rarely be without a smile on your face. Well, at least when you're not stuck on a puzzle. Which you will be, many times over.

The central premise remains the same as before – enter room, use portals to figure out

how to open the exit and leave room. Done. But there are new variables thrown in, as with all good sequels, both to mix up the formula and surprise even those that played the original 42,348 times. Aside from the hard-light bridges and levitation beams – both pretty self-explanatory – we have a few gels. Blue lets you bounce high, orange increases momentum, white makes any surface portal-able and water... well, is water. Just think how much Valve did with the original game, then throw in this new batch of wildcards. Then say a silent prayer for your sanity as you walk around the same test chamber for the 30th time after trying to

Portal 2 is a game that's going to be talked about for a long time to come

figure out what to do for the last 30 minutes. We wouldn't have it any other way.

But a fantastic, deep and engaging mechanic wouldn't get such a high number at the end of these words if it wasn't for the detail, the care – the *love* Valve has clearly poured into *Portal 2*. It's a rich, convincing world, with a story that reveals itself in a far deeper fashion than the first game did, and in a completely non-intrusive way. We're looking at you, cut-scenes. But then there's



DETAILS

Publisher

EA

Developer

Valve

Price

£49.99

Players

1-2

Genre

Puzzle

Supports

720p, PlayStation

Network, Downloadable

content, DualShock 3,

Dolby Digital 5.1

Age Rating

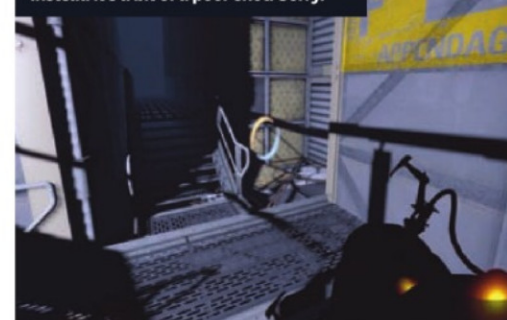
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Website

thinkwithportals.com



● We tried to get the lovely lighting here. Instead it's a bit of a poor shot. Sorry.



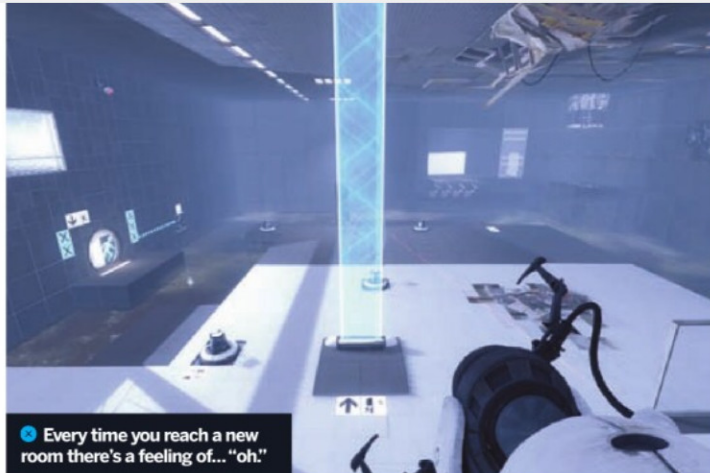
the detail, from GLaDOS and her turns of phrase through how you can stand and watch the entire manufacturing process of a turret (don't worry, it's both short and you don't have to watch it) and onto the fact that the things you've done are *remembered*. That may seem a small point, but when panic is replaced by relief – even laughter – when you realise something you did earlier has just saved your booty, that's the sign of a Very Good Thing. Characters never betray their core sensibilities, the game's logic is never suddenly changed in order to restrict the player – *Portal 2* respects the player as much as it treats them well, and it comes off utterly superbly as a result. It's that good to the player that we actually felt a bit bad when we fluked our way through a test chamber by accidentally landing on a window ledge we



In this
series



The Orange Box Issue 161
Not just Portal, but a collection of
superb games... **93%**



Every time you reach a new room there's a feeling of... "oh."



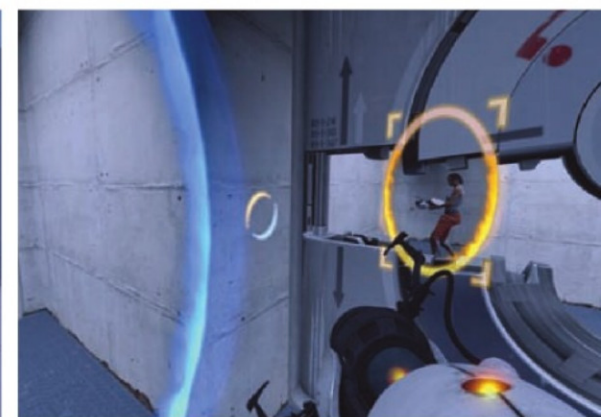
Orange means WHOOSH!

FLYING THE COOP

TO LET OFF SOME STEAM

CO-OP IS A whole other game, pretty much – a different story, puzzles, ending and characters. And guess what? It's also utterly fantastically superbly brilliant. Players aren't just forced to work together – they're forced to trust each other, all while GLaDOS tries her best to drive a wedge between them. Amazing.

Tying in the whole online thing is Steam, which Valve has now introduced to PS3. It's well integrated, carrying across the friends list of the PC/Mac version as well as allowing cross-format chat and other neat little touches. It's only the beginning, but this could – and should – be huge.



probably shouldn't have been able to get to. Our apology letter is in the mail, Gabe.

Negatives? Well, if you're incapable of thinking logically, you're likely to end up stumped. Ditto if you're lacking in patience. But then, who's fault is that? And if you're really dead set against the notion of reasonably frequent interruptions for loading then you might get a bit miffed. The rest of us will just ignore it, because there are times when what would normally be a problem can just be overlooked. Just don't tell *Crysis 2* that, or it might get annoyed. Other than that, we're genuinely struggling to think of negatives. Not enough cake? Oh, spoiler.

Portal 2 once again proves you don't need bald space marines, you don't need machine guns and super violence, scantily clad women or dialogue and a sense of humour

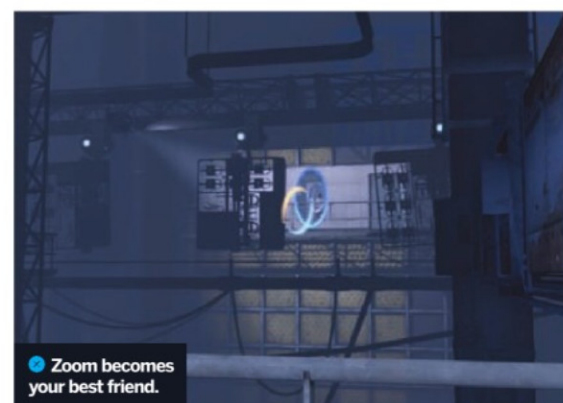
a six year old would find insultingly bland to be successful. You don't need any of it to be one of the best games of the year, or one of the best games ever released on PS3, or even one of *the best games*. All you need is wit, clever design, a simple, flexible central mechanic and some of the best voice work we've heard in a game. Is that too much to ask? Well, yes, probably. Valve wins again.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

There's a lot of great stuff to come in 2011, but we're confident that by the end of it *Portal 2* will still be one of the forerunners for game of the year. No fruity descriptions, no fancy words: just buy it.

95%



Zoom becomes your best friend.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Mortal Kombat

For all lovers of gore



DETAILS

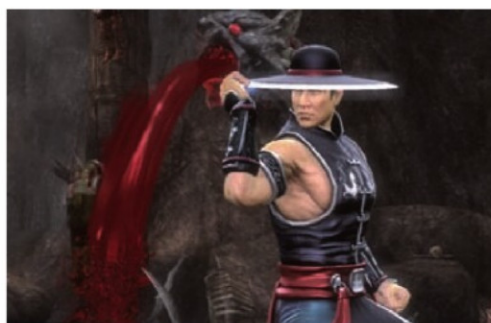
Publisher
Warner Bros.
Developer
NetherRealm
Studios
Price
£44.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Fighter
Supports
1080p,
Downloadable
content, DualShock
3, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
18
Website
www.
themortalkombat.
com



For all the talk of a maturing games industry and adult gaming with deep stories and meaningful themes, there's still a very large portion of our brains that's only interested in seeing maturity spread liberally all over the walls and dangling limply from the hand of our warrior after he's ripped it out of his adversary's body. It's that part of the brain – some prehistoric, animal instinct driven part – that *Mortal Kombat* has always managed to appeal to and thankfully that's not changed in 2011.

While the *MK* series has never really been in the same league as the very best that Capcom or even Namco has had to offer in the beat-'em-up genre, that's never really been the point. Even its closest competitor, *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* has more going on in terms of linking moves and finding new exploits, but that's not a big problem. *Mortal Kombat* is neither as frantic and chaotic as *MVC* or as deep and precise, but it's better for it. It's no elitist. *Mortal Kombat* is a fighter for the common man. You don't need to analyse every last frame of every last punch to win.

Having said all that *Mortal Kombat* isn't stuck in the past, but where it has been updated for modern times it still manages to feel true to itself. It's a mixed bag of results, though. The X-ray moves, for instance, are superb. They can genuinely change the face of a match when used at the right time and you only need to hold down **L2** and **R2** to pull them off. More importantly they feel right at home in this series. Like everything that is best about *Mortal Kombat* they are unapologetically brutal, gratuitous and violent in the extreme. As a result of that they also



Scorpion remains one of the most brutal and brilliant characters on the roster.



happen to be hilarious. The Super Meter that builds towards these moves, though, feels oddly weighted. One bar for more powerful special moves, but two for a combo breaker? Using the meter for anything other than the X-ray attack has proven difficult for us to justify.

Mortal Kombat does simple things to keep itself accessible, though, even with these trappings of complexity. Many of the special moves only need three button inputs and the X-ray moves are as simple as holding down the

What *Mortal Kombat* lacks in depth and sophistication it certainly makes up for with variety and fan service

triggers. Things like being able to pause the game at any time to check your move list, even as your opponent is falling to the floor, so you can remind yourself what your Fatality is make things nice and simple for everybody. And getting even more basic is how all of these moves are displayed. They are all context sensitive to where you're standing so that backwards or forwards is relative to where you are at that moment and the punches or kicks are simply displayed as your face buttons. This is idiot-proof stuff, which is handy because shutting off all but the animal part of your brain that we mentioned earlier is kind of what *Mortal Kombat* should be about.

There are, of course, drawbacks to all this simplification. As has often been the case *Mortal Kombat* can feel sluggish at times and its lack of depth in its fighting mechanics

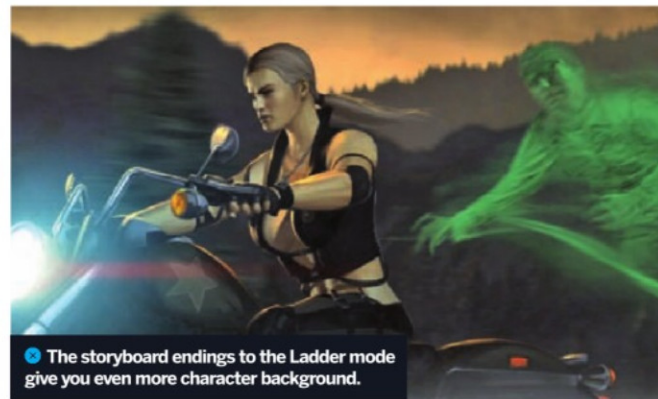


Mini-games like Test Your Sight help break up the traditional fighting modes.

In this
series



Mortal Kombat Vs DC Universe Issue 173
Rent with our blessing, but purchase only if
you're immune to buyer's remorse. 68%



• The storyboard endings to the Ladder mode give you even more character background.



is going to limit its life span. The challenges it throws at you can be tough, but often that feels more like the weakness in the character you're playing as than anything else.

Fighters with stun moves in particular wield a significant advantage as these can be used to tee off an X-ray move or just a combo. Some of the X-ray moves are also rather hit and miss. Johnny Cage's, for instance, requires that someone hit him first. And taking on the likes of Goro, Kintaro or Shao Kahn without projectiles is an unholy slog as each can seemingly auto-break combos.

But for all that, what *Mortal Kombat* lacks in depth and sophistication it certainly makes up for with variety and fan service. The Story mode is fully animated and retells the tale of the first three *Mortal Kombat* games and should prove very popular with long-time fans of the series. The Ladder mode is more of a traditional arcade fighting campaign, working your way up to fight Shao Khan with the reward of a story-boarded ending and voiceover.

And then there is the Challenge tower and the spin off 'Test Your...' towers for Might, Strike

and all the rest. There are no excuses for getting bored and each of these earns you the coins to spend on unlocking extra content like Fatalities and costumes in the Krypt.

The bottom line on all this is that while *Mortal Kombat* probably won't be gracing the halls of many top-ranking fighting tournaments it will find a home in many people's living rooms. You don't need a fight stick to be great at it (*Mortal Kombat* feels designed to work best with the DualShock's D-pad) and you don't need the reflexes of the Man of Steel to look cool as all hell while you're playing it.

Jon Gordon

VERDICT

This is *Mortal Kombat* as it should always have been, putting memories of the DC Universe crossover in the rear-view mirror where it belongs. It's not classic and fighter purists will find things to moan about, but that doesn't stop it from being a hell of a lot of fun.

81%

KRATOS AND KOMPANY

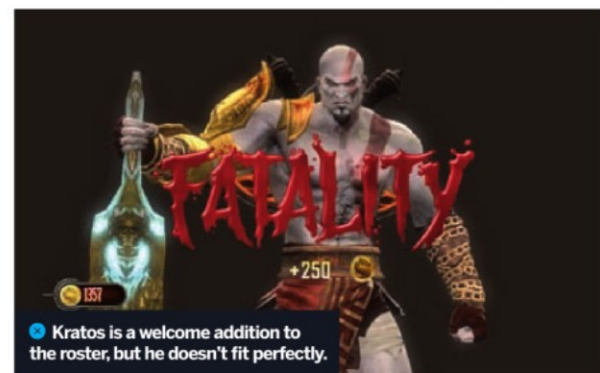
How does the God of War fit with MK?

MORTAL KOMBAT IS perhaps not the best fit for Kratos. His fluid fighting style doesn't really translate as well to this game as it did for *Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny* on PSP. He can't swing and leap and flail around in quite the same way. Having said that, you couldn't really ask for a more violent or brutal setting and in that regard Kratos fits in rather

beautifully. We particularly liked how NetherRealm Studios incorporated some quick-time events into his moves. Small touches like that help show that while bringing Kratos into this game is a bit of a gimmick, it was still done with love and respect for the character. Hopefully the downloadable content to come will follow suit.



• The Story mode for *Mortal Kombat* gives you a new spin on an old story.



• Kratos is a welcome addition to the roster, but he doesn't fit perfectly.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

SOCOM: Special Forces

A Toff, a Geordie and a Tyke walk into a warzone...



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony Computer Entertainment
Developer
Zipper Interactive
Price
£49.99
Players
1-32
Genre
Third-person shooter
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network,
Downloadable content, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
16
Web site
www.socom.com



Tactical seems to have lost all meaning in recent years. Where once it meant 'you really do have to plan this or it will all go tits up and you will look quite the fool', it now seems to mean 'you can make your squad advance or come back. And sometimes shoot people.' This is very much the world of thinking *SOCOM: Special Forces* subscribes to.

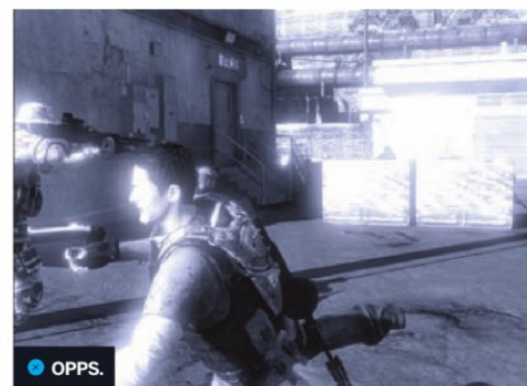
It's also not particularly a world that punishes the player for mistakes, allowing them to simply mow their way through many missions with tactics, nuance and strategy all replaced with the all-embracing power of bullets. This is apart from the handful of stealth missions, where instead of being superpowered the player is made into a weakling and enemies are outfitted with both laser-powered super eyes and omniscience. It's safe to say *Special Forces* misses the intended mark by quite a margin.

It's a functional bit of software – that's as far as we're really willing to go with the praise – in that it does most things how it's supposed to. It can be satisfying to set up a delayed assault by your squads, and getting through a stealth mission in one go without being spotted does give a lift. But then it's almost impossible to get through anything without encountering problems, like how your team-mates tend not to run away from grenades, or how enemies don't bother shooting and instead *just throw grenades*, or how your team-mates often don't bother returning fire when being shot in the face, or how you often get shot through cover, or how the story is boring and forgettable. The issues; they do pile up.

And here's your obligatory Move paragraph: using Move, *SOCOM* is half-decent. Using the Move Sharpshooter, it is half-decent but with a pointless and expensive extra piece of plastic involved. Move paragraph ends.



• The best thing about this game is having a massive bloke from Yorkshire on your squad.



• OPFS.

Special Forces just isn't a very good game in single-player. The campaign is short and pretty uneventful, with a completely ignorable story. Issues with friendly and enemy AI plague the experience from start to finish and there's just nothing to it that we can really recommend over most other military shooters. It's a real shame, as we were hankering for a slice of fine tactic-'em-up. Instead we've been given a run-'n'-gunner masquerading as something more cerebral.

Then we get to the second half of the review, and it's where we start talking about multiplayer. Exciting, no? *SOCOM* has always been a series about the online component, and while more effort has been made on the single-player section this time around it clearly hasn't lived up to many of the expectations we had. So it's left to the multiplayer – the area where *SOCOM* was an early console king, pre-*COD*, *Battlefield* et al – to rescue the whole operation. It's safe to say while there will be a predictably vocal and supportive community behind the game, just as with *MAG*, it isn't a great deal of... well, anything much, really. Just as with *MAG*, then.

There are enough modes and modifications available to keep things different, at least until you get bored of the varying stipulations. Generally speaking there are four base

The campaign is short and pretty uneventful, with a completely ignorable story

modes: suppression is your basic team deathmatch; bomb squad sees players attempting to defuse or protect some naughty bombs strewn around; last defence sees a progression of capture points leading to bombing the enemy base; and uplink is a simple case of stealing the enemy's data – so capture the flag then. Custom rule sets can be applied, as can 'classic' *SOCOM* settings – this mixes the formula up a bit, but to be honest it's just not that engaging. At least not when compared to other modern shooters.

Maps are large and, at least when you're playing with 31 other players, hectic. It's strange that with so many players it rarely feels overwhelming, or like you're constantly being killed without having a chance to get a





PLAY TOGETHER, STAY TOGETHER

THERE'S CO-OPERATIVE PLAY in *SOCOM*, too, where up to six people can work together on a variety of missions. Though to be honest they're usually just about bringing down some kind of 'insurgent', who often seems to be from a country that isn't the United States or anywhere in Central Europe. Anyway,

headsets are pretty essential here, as otherwise you won't be able to co-ordinate your attacks very well – and the game looks after those with mics, offering easy communication with your team-mates. Which is nice. Naturally, co-op is good fun, but as with the rest of the game it still has an air of blandness about it.

feel for the thing. It's slower paced than some other online shooters and that, as far as we're concerned, is a good thing. It's not for everyone, certainly, but the ability to sneak about prone, go into cover and choose your shots carefully will certainly appeal to many out there.

Special Forces is a mediocre single-player with a half-decent multiplayer section backing it up, dragging it out of utterly forgettable territory. It's unfortunate that the series is no longer an innovator online, and it has been bettered by many other shooters out there. All the same, it is still a bit of fun. And we can guarantee there will be a strong community backing it up for a long time as it's a series that encourages that kind of thing.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Single-player is a tactical shooter lacking in most of the 'tactical' aspect – short and boring, with little that appeals. Multiplayer is definitely the main draw here, but even that isn't enough to really recommend what is ultimately a banal package.

63%

• This is about as tactical as it gets – waiting to tell your people to attack.



In this series



SOCOM: Confrontation Issue 178
The first next-gen *SOCOM* missed out most of the 'next-gen' stuff... 55%

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Operation Flashpoint: Red River



DETAILS

Publisher
Codemasters
Developer
In-house

Price
£49.99
Players
1-4

Genre
FPS

Supports
720p, PlayStation
Network, DualShock
3, Dolby Digital 5.1

Age Rating
18

Website
www.flashpointgame.com

Another day on the job

PS3 Humping it for miles and miles across open country. Calling in aerial shock and awe, then sweeping in to mop up. Following direct orders, issued to us through the chain of command. Waiting for long periods while there's nothing happening. Waiting. Crouching behind minimal cover, brass whizzing past our heads, wondering how in the hell we're going to work up the courage to execute that flanking manoeuvre. If there's one thing that *Red River* must be applauded for, it's its stubborn adherence to military reality.

Codemasters has drained all the Hollywood out. Beyond calling in the odd air strike or mortar bombardment, there are no movie moments. Just smoke and dust and bullets and blood. But it takes a long time to adjust, so used to the manufactured neatness of our *Call Of Dutys* and our *Homefronts* have we become. Minutes spent humping across a couple of clicks of the Tajikistan wilderness – with nothing occurring bar various members of our outfit complaining – feel unusually stale. There is no music, no pithy one-liners, just the sombre sound of the wind and a bunch of mildly racist, potty-mouthed jarheads trying their best not to die. There's some reality for you.

We confess; our first thoughts were 'we hate this'. Not even 'it's alright' or 'it's a bit rubbish', but 'we actually hate this'. *Red*



River does itself no favours on a visual level. The peaks and plains of Tajikistan aren't the most eye-catching part of the world to begin with, but Codemasters' Ego engine, while fantastic at racing games, copes poorly with its wide-open vistas. It's difficult to behold at first. There's grass popping up a few metres away, low-resolution textures on practically everything that's not human and even a shortage of animation: soldiers can't swim, and both you and your squaddies pop in and out of vehicles in a single frame.

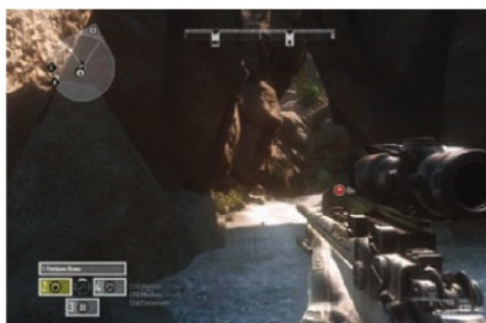
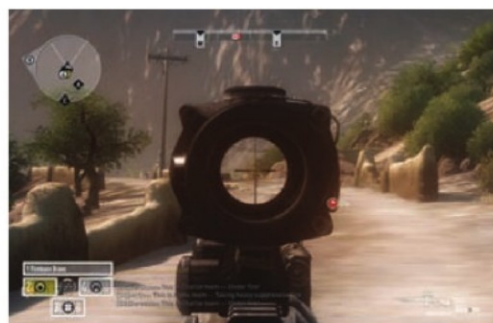
Worse still, there are bugs. A couple of times, we lost all comms chatter and had to reset

back to the last checkpoint where it magically reappeared. And there were several instances of enemies and squaddies alike becoming stuck on, or even inside, scenery, along with many other, smaller glitches.

There is no music, no pithy one-liners, just the sombre sound of the wind

But playing *Red River* is rather like going back and watching an utterly fantastic film on VHS. Although initially shocking to your HD-spoiled eyes, your brain adjusts after a while. It begins to filter out all that nitpicky shit and exposes you instead to the experience that lies beneath – an experience that is, quite frankly, like no other videogame we've ever played barring its predecessor.

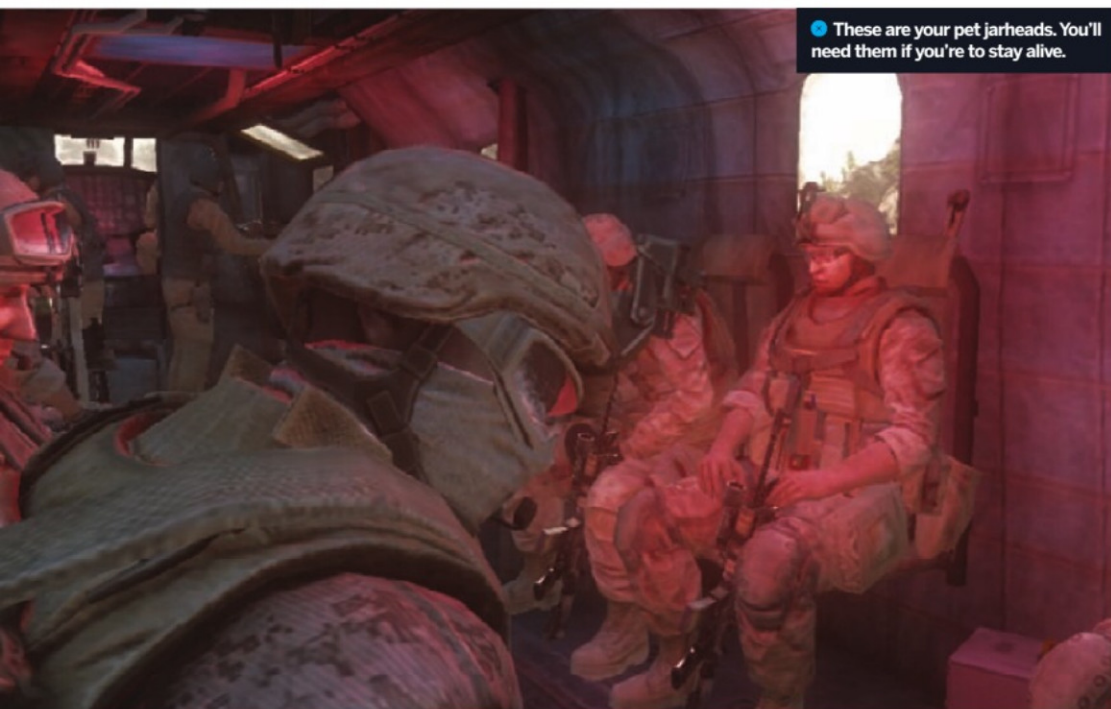
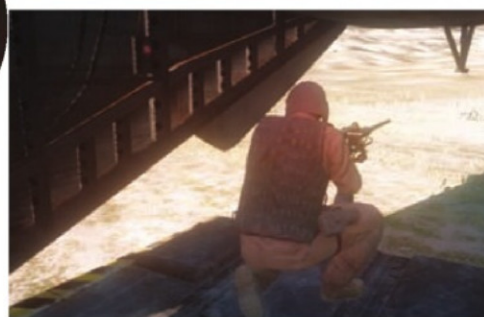
Red River has a four-player co-op option, which, for shame, went untested in this review due to the game not being out at the time of review. We can, however, extrapolate based on the squad command aspects of playing solo. Essentially, with three friends this is going to be a better game. Not that there's anything wrong with playing solo, but in its complexity,



In this
series



Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising Issue 185
A fine military shooter addition,
but for the real, hardcore only. 78%



rather like its predecessor, *Dragon Rising*, *Red River* borrows a few problems. For one, all those radial command menus add considerably to the game's comparatively steep learning curve, and getting players in the saddle as quickly as possible is doubly important when a game falls so far short of the graphical 'Wow!' zone.

But once adjusted to the bland, sometimes broken, presentation, and you've taught yourself the lion's share of the game's complexities, *Operation Flashpoint: Red River* is nothing short of excellent. Among other factors, the constant chatter from Staff Sergeant Knox (played by AI Matthews, best known for his role as Gunnery Sergeant Al Apone in the film *Aliens*) has an exponential effect on the reality of the experience.

As you progress through *Red River*'s missions – separated here by days – you'll earn skill points and unlock new weaponry, attachments, grenades and other gadgets. Your entire squad will level up with you, so rather than just deciding what your player character will carry and what his exact role within the squad will be, you can alter these characteristics for your squad-mates as well. Initially, we started out as a rifleman, with our

other three squad members occupying the roles of scout, grenadier and auto rifleman.

We found early on that while effective at mid-range, the rifleman can burn a lot of ammo when exchanging fire over long distances, so it's a good idea to have an in-depth look at the mission briefing and decide what's going to be the most effective set of classes. Clearing buildings, for example, will be especially difficult, if not impossible, with a scout's sniper rifle in your hands. It's pretty rare to find a game of this type where each class is so tangibly and effectively different and for us, this is just another reason to like it. And to our great surprise, like it we did.

Dan Howdle

VERDICT

***Red River* isn't for everybody. But if you're willing to forgive it a little engine trouble, and to put in the hours to get to know rather than make visually fixated snap judgements, then beneath all those barriers lies a deep, satisfying military experience that is quite unlike anything else you've ever encountered.**

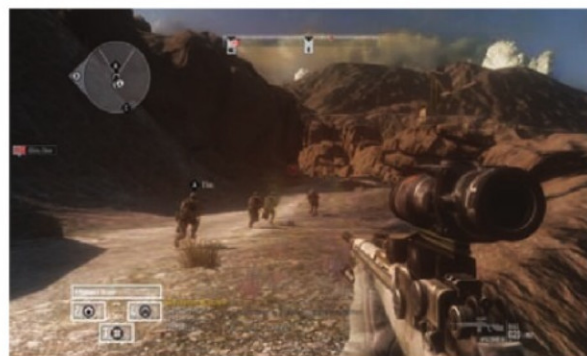
75%

Operation Flashpoint: Red River

WHEN I GET THAT FEELIN'

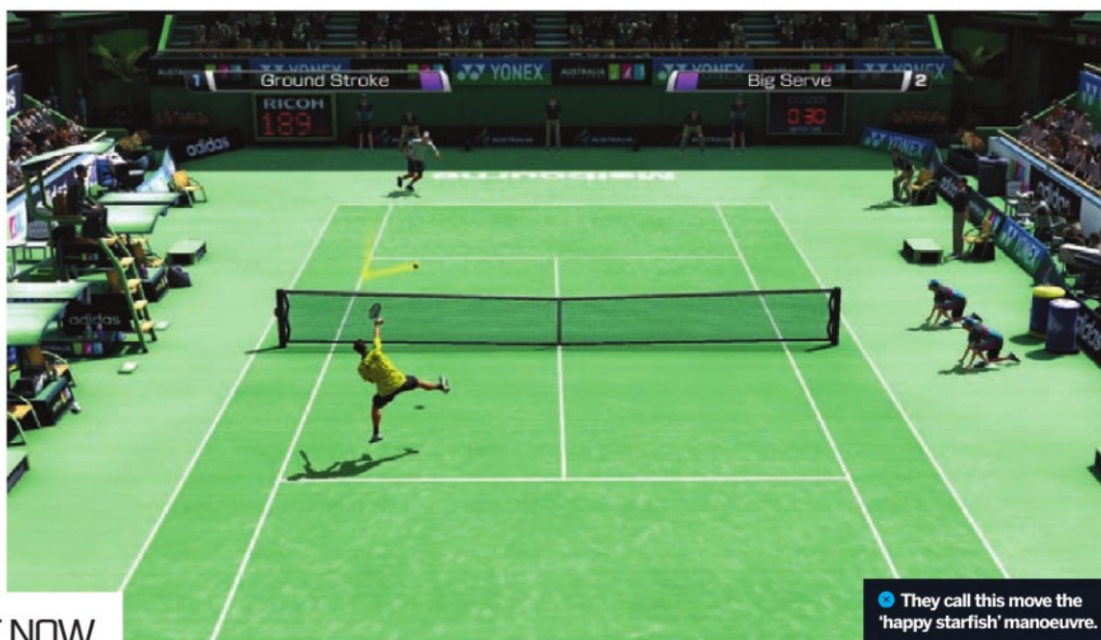
I run away

ONE OF THE more interesting quirks of *Red River* is its health system. Rather than simply regenerate à la every other shooter in existence, you'll need to stop, find cover and bandage yourself when grazed by a bullet. It works pretty well all told, with its only major hiccup occurring when you try to heal your squad-mates. They have a habit of running away, you see, thanks to the game's AI, or rather, lack of it.





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



They call this move the 'happy starfish' manoeuvre.



Virtua Tennis 4

In Virtua Tennis, love actually does account for something

DETAILS

Publisher Sega
Developer Sega
Price £49.99
Players 1-4
Genre Sports
Supports 1080i, 720p, PlayStation Network, Sixaxis, PlayStation Move, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating 3
Website www.sega.co.uk/virtuatennis4



While *Top Spin 4* chooses to rely on statistics and RPG character development to give its tennis simulation a sense of depth and strategy, *Virtua Tennis 4* opts once again for its streamlined, simple and accessible approach to play. Strange then, that it feels no more lacking in depth than 2K's game. Sega has consistently proven itself over the years in its ability to create riveting, well-paced matches with a satisfying sense of rhythm and flow without needing to over-complicate the experience with a variety of convoluted inputs and mathematics. *Virtua Tennis 4* is again a tennis game that can be played with

just one button, but still have you leaping from your seat after a well-placed volley.

One of the ways in which Sega quietly prods players towards a more involved style of play is through the introduction of a skill shot button, an addition which rewards players with a powerful special shot for playing in a particular style. It instils matches with more variety and convincing play

Virtua Tennis remains the best tennis experience available today

patterns, making *Virtua Tennis* almost as engaging as *Top Spin 4* without the need for an elaborate system of stats.

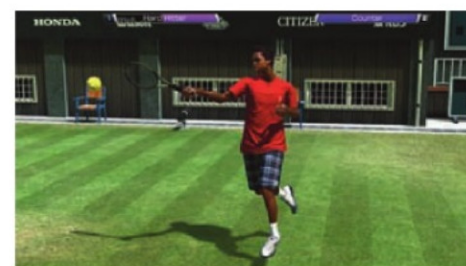
But don't worry. *Virtua Tennis* hasn't suddenly become a po-faced simulation game. There's still plenty of silliness to be found in the mini-games, which incorporate everything from collecting chicken eggs to playing tennis while surrounded by powerful wind machines (yet while these games might be absurd on the surface, each one surreptitiously teaches the player about footing, movement and placement).

Changes in the formula come in the redesigned World Tour mode, which sees the player use randomly generated tickets to skip between events in a system of progression not unlike a board game. Also integrated is PlayStation Move, which cannot be used during World Tour but only in a bespoke option that offers exhibition matches and just two mini-games. The dearth of Move content is matched by the device's unimpressive implementation – the constant shifting between first and third perspectives is unnecessary and confusing, and skilful play tends to be the result of lucky slashes and waves rather than dexterity or ability.

Such new additions feel like novelties rather than anything substantial. What truly makes *Virtua Tennis* worth playing is that which has always been its best asset since



Andy Murray on his way to losing another Grand Slam.



the series' humble beginnings – a system of play that's paradoxically simplistic and yet totally captivating. Get three friends on with you and you'll discover that although it's feeling a little over-familiar at this point, *Virtua Tennis* remains the best tennis experience available on PlayStation today.

Chris McMahon

VERDICT

It's only a slight improvement on what already felt like filler in *Virtua Tennis 2009*, but despite the feeling of over-familiarity it's still a fantastic multiplayer game and one of the better interpretations of a sport on PS3.

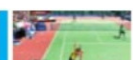
79%



"Are you not entertained? ARE YOU NOT ENTERTAINED?"



In this series



Virtua Tennis 3 Issue 150
 Back when the series felt fresher, *Virtua Tennis 3* was brilliant pick-up-and-play entertainment **91%**

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Patapon 3

Placating the masses via mind-warping, rhythmic beats. Allegedly



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony Computer Entertainment
Developer
In-house
Price
£29.99
Players
1-8
Genre
Rhythm action
Supports
Ad-hoc Wi-Fi Multiplayer,
Infrastructure Wi-Fi
Multiplayer, TV In/Out
Age Rating
7
Website
www.patapon-game.com



Patapon should be introduced as a part of special forces' entry exams. Play the game for two hours, then sit in a room, alone, for a further six hours. During that time you are not allowed to tap a rhythm on anything, or audibly go "pata, pata, pata, pon" (or any other combination of drumming from the game). If you do, you will fail and immediately be waterboarded until you admit to committing crimes you literally could not have had a hand in.

Pata, pata, pata, pon! Oops. It gets in your head, you know? It just... stays there. It's four beats – four little chunks of onomatopoeia – yet it can sit in the mind for hours, even days, slowly chipping away at your sanity. While some proclaim it to be an innocent and simple attempt to perpetuate this rhythm-action series – now into its third instalment (the clue's in the name) – we all know it's just a thinly veiled assault on the populace, likely perpetrated by the CIA.

Even so, we want to welcome our new CIA overlords with open arms, because *Patapon* is a proven formula and still tweaks

It's just a thinly veiled assault on the populace, likely perpetrated by the CIA

our happy-time nips with its catchy beats, simple-but-not-that-simple fun, great looks



and a few extras we're seeing introduced this time around.

The main character is now an actual character, rather than a god – as such he can level up, get new weapons and even die. It's a simple change, but certainly helps, making the player feel more connected to the action. Then there's

multiplayer, which has been beefed up massively from last time around and allows people to play together from wherever they are in the world. It's not going to change the world – even though the CIA clearly wants it to – but it's nice to see and an avenue a lot of PSP developers are approaching with success. Though there's every chance we've been brainwashed into saying that.

It's arguably the best version of *Patapon* yet released, whether it's a super-secret mind-weapon introduced by the secret service or not. At the same time, it's same old, same old. As such, we can highly recommend *Patapon 3* to newcomers, while those on the fence might want to weigh up just how interested they are in multiplayer. And everyone has to consider whether they believe PATA PATA PATA PON should legally be defined as psychological warfare or not.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

It's great, again, and the additions bring a wave of fresh air to the experience. It is, however, still decidedly stale when it comes to the base mechanics and even with the changes you really won't be very surprised by any of *Patapon 3*.

81%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Naruto Shippuden: Kizuna Drive

Proof that having to review games isn't always a great job



Publisher Namco Bandai **Developer** Premium Agency
Price £24.99 **Players** 1-4 **Genre** Action **Supports** Ad-hoc
Wi-Fi Multiplayer, **TV In/Out** Age Rating 12 **Website:** www.namcobandagames.com/console

We tried to count just how many *Naruto* games have been released in the last 12 months, but we ran out of numbers. Instead we've had to settle for the less specific: 'a lot of them'. Seemingly every bloody day there's a new one; similar to the last; some good; most not; rarely are any bad enough to really rip on. *Kizuna Drive* is different, though not exactly in the best way.

It's still not a travesty on the scale of *Quantum Theory* or *Rogue Warrior*, but it is a wooden, rather haphazard brawler that lets players down almost every step of the way. Samey, limited environments offer nothing of interest, enemies are identikit and boring, boss battles are needlessly frustrating

and the whole package just feels a little bit too slapdash for our liking, or – we would assume – for the liking of *Naruto*'s fan base. Plus, of course, there are the voiceovers, which make us want to die that little bit inside every time we hear them. Stupid jump-suited little prannock.

Four-player co-op is a nice idea but ultimately quite pointless, whereas single-player just sees you sharing the battlefield with three complete numbskulls who rarely lift an unprompted finger to help a ninja in need. It's disappointing on one hand and downright annoying on the other, which is a fitting way to end this review as it's wasting our valuable time to continue writing.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Even a game including the term "the ultimate sexy ninjutsu" can't be much fun when it's as dull and poorly made as *Kizuna Drive*. This game screams 'avoid'.

42%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Michael Jackson: The Experience

A real thriller, or simply bad?



Publisher Ubisoft **Developer** In-house **Price** £39.99
Players 1-4 **Genre** Dancing **Supports** 1080i, 720p, PSN,
DLC, **Dolby Digital** 5.1, **PlayStation Move** Age Rating 12
Website: www.michaeljackson.com

With *The Beatles: Rock Band*, Harmonix set a

precedent for music games that pay tribute to lost legends, packing the game with substance and reverence fitting of the Fab Four's fantastic ten years. *That* felt like an experience. Ubisoft's celebration of all things Michael Jackson feels more like a quickly forgotten occurrence.

It's not like Ubisoft was left wanting for content. The game features 26 songs spanning 25 years of the star's life in the spotlight. Up to four players can join in – one standing in as MJ himself, two as backup dancers, and one on microphone.

Picking a song will see the dancers dressed in the clothes from Jackson's music videos, and there

are little touches such as his famous rhinestone-covered glove signifying which hand the Move controller should be held in. But these ideas hardly make up for the poor implementation of the dancing. The Move and PS Eye pick up your movements well enough, but the dance moves are terribly signposted, the diagrams a poor indication of what you're supposed to do. It doesn't help that the tutorials are only unlocked by progressing, which is incredibly difficult without access to the instructions in the first place.

It's not a terrible game, and MJ fans will love it despite the difficulty and lack of content beyond the dancing and singing. But still, Ubisoft could have put more effort in than this if it wanted to pay a real fitting tribute.

Chris McMahon

VERDICT

Ubisoft could have worked harder to make a more fitting tribute, but if nothing else *The Experience* leaves one undeniable impression – MJ made some incredible music.

58%



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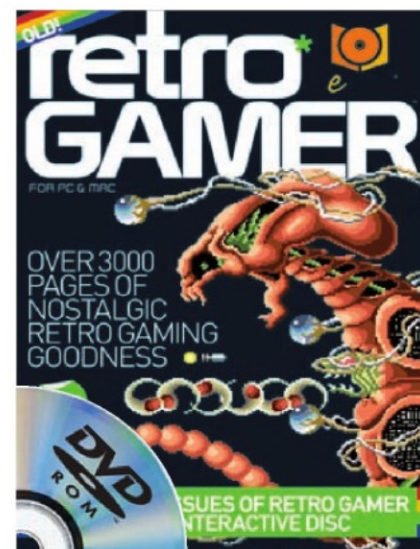
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The Online Head-To-Head

KILLZONE 3

WHY IT'S GOOD:

- + Classy classes
- + Meaty machine guns
- + Personalised progress

Killzone 3 is chunky, it's only right to point that out. It feels really quite hefty, though not slow, and as such it's that bit more satisfying to kill Captain_Splatter_9k after he's hit you with the thousandth headshot in a row. It just *feels* better.

Generally speaking, *Killzone 3*'s multiplayer component is good, solid fun, taking on board a simple class mechanic and offering a steady stream of upgrades as you progress through the game. Also: turrets.

The class system is under-represented by the community, though

that doesn't make it inherently bad. What it does mean is that the number of players choosing to be a medic is more limited than you might hope, meaning you're not as likely to be revived as you are in a more balanced title like, say, *Bad Company 2*. When things do come together – when they *are* balanced – they can be a thing of beauty, with everyone working together for a common goal.

There are questionable decisions, like how you have to earn the right to have a sidearm, and generally speaking it brings very little new or of interest to the online FPS table.

But *Killzone 3*'s multiplayer is, as we said, good, solid fun and definitely trumps the rather banal single-player. Shame it doesn't stand up to the combined assault of today's opposition.

CRYSIS 2

WHY IT'S GOOD:

- + Mixed maps
- + Superb superpowers
- + Custom conundrums

The multiplayer component of *Crysis 2* does have one thing over its opposition: it is developed by Crytek UK – formerly Free Radical, of the brilliant *TimeSplitters*, and former-formerly some members of the *GoldenEye* development team. The good one, not *Rogue Agent*. It's a shame then that the experience feels so standard when put side to side with other online shooters.

The suit powers do make things interesting and bring unique elements to the multiplayer side of things. Players who are capable of carefully mixing their stealth and armour mods will find

themselves able to brawl or sneak their way through many encounters. Just as in single-player, it's a simple but significant addition. Unfortunately the overall experience just feels like a very normal online first-person shooter with a few extra powers thrown in to make it a little bit different.

One area that seems to have been misjudged is the pace at which things are unlocked. On one hand it's absolutely the right decision to offer low-rank games for those of level 10 and below, but on the other it's a bit of a crock to lock entire game modes until level 22.

Some places it works, like rationing out classes and weapons in the early stages, but some it just becomes irritating and restricts where it should be helping. Less babysitting and this would be a better experience.

● *Killzone* has a chunky weight that makes it feel like a meaty online shooter in comparison to the others.



VS

● Whether it's armour or stealth, using the suit powers in the heat of a frantic online shootout is a great feeling.



● Shame there aren't more Medics milling about though, and we never say that about FPS games.



● This is the scenario you want to avoid though. Unless you're the guys on the right. In which case, well done!



HOMEFRONT

WHY IT'S GOOD:

- + Innovative/interesting
- + Excitingly escalatory
- + Varying vehicles

Frontlines: *Fuel Of War* was an interesting take on the online shooter that brought many good ideas to the fore and was promptly ignored by everyone. Fortunately Kaos decided to bring back elements from its first game, carrying them over to *Homefront*. This is a good thing.

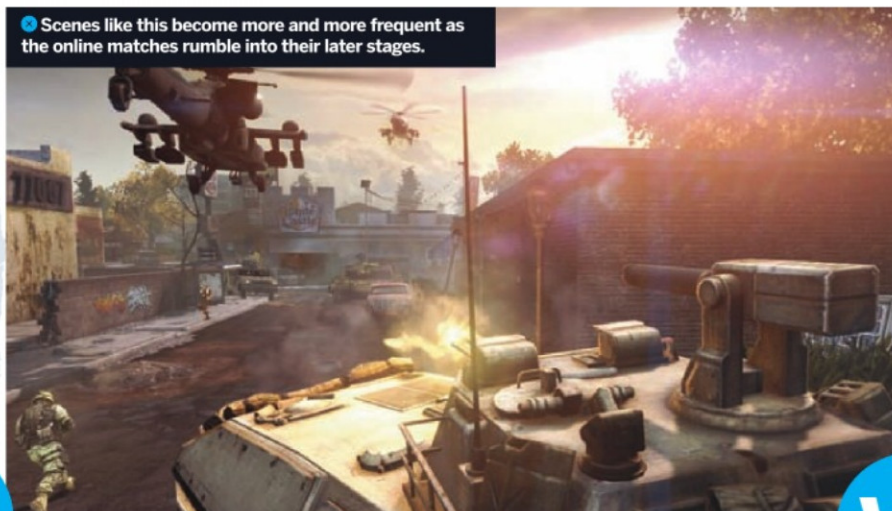
The standard modes are just that – standard – but don't let that put you off. The key element that helps *Homefront* along in its online section is the battle points system. These rack up during play and can be used to buy vehicles, meaning as a game progresses

it gets more and more technologically advanced as players build up their points and cash in for tanks, choppers and attack drones. It's deceptively simple, yet brings so much goodness it's impossible not to be impressed.

Homefront struggles against, say *Crysis 2*, in that it can sometimes take a long time to get a game going. Needing a minimum of 16 players in some modes, compared to *Crysis*'s handful, can mean a lot of lobby-sitting if you're not playing at a busy time of day.

Otherwise our main complaint is the foundation – the fundamentals – of the game. It's just not a very interesting prospect, there's not much to entice newcomers. Once you're in, though, what you've got is a good online first-person shooter we hope to see more from in future.

Scenes like this become more and more frequent as the online matches rumble into their later stages.



Saving up points to spend on tanks, aircraft or other bonuses is a big part of *Homefront*'s unique strategy.



VS

BULLETSTORM

WHY IT'S GOOD:

- + Bloody brutal
- + Sublime skillshots
- + Hopelessly hilarious

Trust *Bulletstorm* to mix things up. Instead of the massive, pitched battles we see elsewhere, *People Can Fly*'s shooter only allows up to four players and doesn't subscribe to the usual deathmatches or flag capturing, instead opting for pure score runs and competitive skill-moving. It would have been too difficult to balance the weapons and the leash for competitive modes, after all.

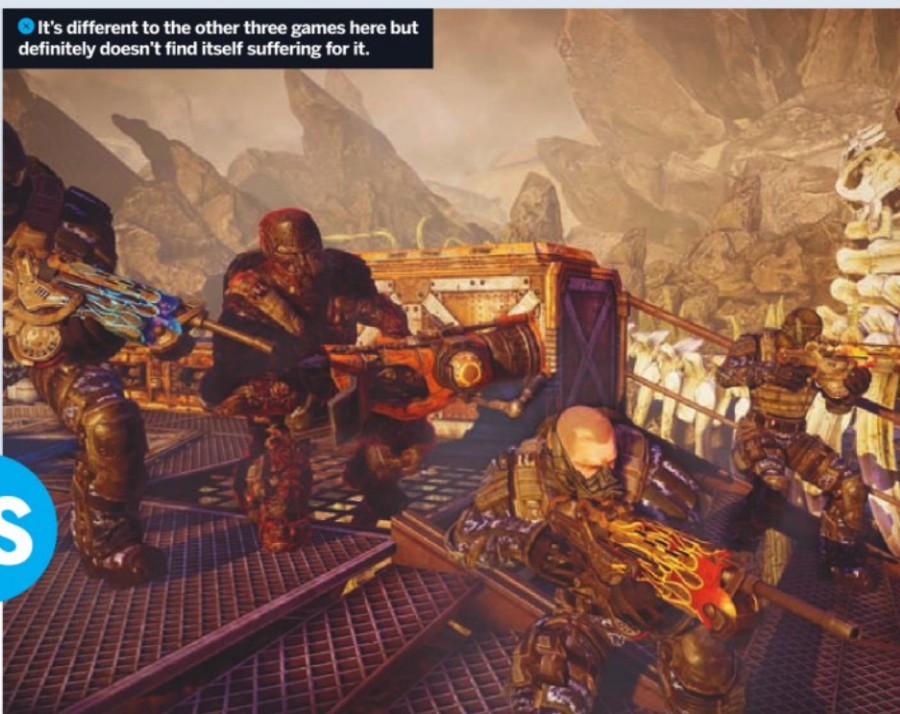
What you're left with is a frantic scrabble to work together – an interesting concept when put next to the other three games, which mainly

demand you KILL ALL THE PEOPLE. Team skill moves are the name of the game, and you simply won't progress without working together. As for the one-off, super-special bonus skill moves for extra points? Well, just don't be the one who does a 'topless' shot when you're meant to go for 'vertigo'. You might get some angry messages sent your way.

Echoes mode is an indirect competitive mode, leaderboard based rather than working together or against each other on the same field of play. It taps into what makes *Bulletstorm* so much fun and distills the experience to as pure a form as you could hope for.

It's weird – we're glad *Bulletstorm* eschews the usual 'just kill each other' mentality, but at the same time it does feel a bit lacking without it.

It's different to the other three games here but definitely doesn't find itself suffering for it.



THE WINNER

You might be surprised to find out the winner – by quite a clear margin – is *Homefront*. There are issues, as with all of the games tested, but the experience at least offers something a bit different to the norm. It's balanced, exciting and escalates wonderfully through the course of a conflict.

All the same, we did find ourselves wanting to play *Battlefield: Bad Company 2* while playing all of these games. So much so we're tempted to give it the winner's medal instead.

DETAILS

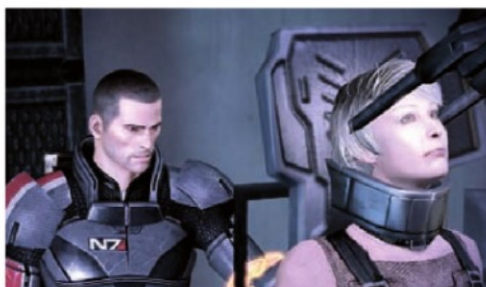
Publisher EA
Developer BioWare
Release Date Out Now
Price £5.49
Players 1
Genre RPG
Supports 720p, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1

Mass Effect 2: Arrival^{DLC}

Late to the party and with few gifts

LAST ISSUE WE looked at some new DLC for *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*. While it offered little that was new, it was at least a mix of choice gameplay cuts and gave an old game a breath of fresh air.

Arrival is looking to do something similar, but doesn't deliver. BioWare's DLC history has



been mixed and this doesn't hold up against the better packs already on the PS3 disc. There's some nice story that begins to draw some threads between *Mass Effect 2* and 3, but it's hard to tell whether they'll have any real impact.

It's in the minute-to-minute action where *Arrival* falters, though. Separated from your squad, *Mass Effect* simply isn't as much fun to play with Shepard alone. Being able to work tactically and combine attacks is what helps you to feel like a true galactic ass-stomper.

The chance to spend more time in this world shouldn't be treated lightly. The sense of depth in every location and character BioWare creates still remains and if you've placed *Mass Effect 3* at the top of your 2011 wish list then this should be downloaded already.

Jon Gordon

VERDICT

One of BioWare's weaker DLC efforts, but still enough here for die-hard *Mass Effect* fans.

64%



This should keep fans of the series going until *Mass Effect 3* is released.

Red Faction: Battlegrounds

GAME

Or... Micro Machines goes flippin' mental

WHAT THQ HAS done with *Battlegrounds* is take the formula of destruction Volition laid down in *Guerrilla*, and condensed it into such a small package that it's become completely volatile, liable to split at the seams and explode at any moment.

Designed in the same manner as any other twin-stick shooter, *Battlegrounds* is a chaotic and concentrated rush of action. Playing against up to four other players, matches are characterised by mini one-on-one battles – choose your target, race over to them and then hold the right analogue stick towards them until they explode. Then it's off to the next, if you haven't already been destroyed by whoever's chasing you.

It's a fast-paced and anarchic affair, with explodable environmental objects and pickups such as proximity mines and singularity bombs flashing across the screen. There's variety too, with King Of The Hill, Capture The Flag and various other

Stacking: The Lost Hobo King^{DLC}

Taking you higher and higher

THE CONTINUING ADVENTURES of Charlie Blackmore, the smallest Russian stacking doll in a world of stacking dolls. This add-on sees the little geezer helping out in the fabled kingdom of Camelfoot, trying to get Rufus the hobo become king. How? Why, by collecting three pieces of the hobo crown, obviously.

There's not much different about the *Lost Hobo King*, unsurprisingly, aside from a few different dolls with different unique moves. Oh, and the ghoulish dolls. Mustn't forget them, as they're strangely scary.

We didn't really give the original game enough space when we initially reviewed it, so let's just have a bit of extra love for the game right here. *Stacking* is lovely. It's warm, well-designed and presented and funny. The fact that every problem has a number of solutions – this carries over to the *Lost Hobo King* – just encourages you



Remember *Ghostbusters*? Don't cross the streams!

Around the fifth stage you'll find that progress is only possible through repetitive grinding, and that you'll need to put in the hours to level up to progress through all 12 stages.

The multiplayer options alleviate some of the issues with difficulty, but also present a slew of other problems that aren't much preferable. *Moon Diver* offers drop-in-drop-out co-op for up to four players, but when playing with a full team you'll find it very difficult to keep track of your character, due to all the on-screen action and the fact feelplus has allowed more than one player to use the same character with no differentiating traits.

So, is *Moon Diver* the *Strider* for the 21st Century as some have suggested? No. It's a so-so side-scroller riddled with design choices that would have felt poor even in 1989.

Chris McMahon

VERDICT

Irritation, apathy, mild disinterest – just a few of the things we felt while playing *Moon Diver*.

46%



Hangin' tough!

Store Reviews

それはどのようによかったか。

DETAILS

Publisher THQ Developer THQ Digital Warrington Release Date Out Now Price £6.29
Players 1-4 Genre Shooter Supports 1080i, 720p, Leaderboards, Dolby Digital 5.1



team-based modes available, and the ability to tweak game properties like turret turn speed and fire rate allowing for more flexibility.

Unfortunately, like most volatile elements, *Battlegrounds* burns bright but for a short time only. The upgrade system and training modes aren't enough to keep the experience entertaining for more than a few hours. Still, *Battlegrounds* is great fun while it lasts, and it stands as proof that there's life in the *Red Faction* universe beyond *GeoMod*.

Chris McMahon



VERDICT

A short but intense flash of arcade brilliance. **78%**

DETAILS

Publisher THQ Developer Double Fine Release Date Out now Price TBC Players 1
Genre Puzzle Supports 720p



to play about with the whole thing that bit more. Then there's the obvious temptation to just scuttle around burping at everything.

The *Lost Hobo King* isn't a huge amount of additional content and you can finish it in a short amount of time. All the same, we're always happy to welcome more Russian dolls into our lives. That's not a weird thing to say. We mean in the game. Not in real life. Not that there's anything wrong with collecting dolls in real life. It's just... oh hush down.

Ian Dransfield



VERDICT

If you're a fan of Russian dolls, you'll love this add-on for the excellent *Stacking*. **80%**

Store Roundup



DUNGEON HUNTER: ALLIANCE GAME

We went hunting for dungeons once. We caught five!

Publisher Gameloft Developer Gameloft
Release date Out now Price £9.99 Players 1-4
Genre Action RPG

This has made its way from iPad to PSN with a crisp HD makeover and Move implementation. Online and local multiplayer with up to four others makes trawling through the many dungeons less repetitive. However, despite such additions, *Alliance* still feels like a smaller game struggling to fill the space on larger hardware. *DeathSpank* is still the best hack-'n'-slasher on PSN. **59%**



NFS HOT PURSUIT THREE FOR ALL BUNDLE DLC

In pursuit of your pocket money

Publisher EA Developer Criterion
Release date Out now Players 1-8
Price £15.99

THREE BITS OF DLC – *Lamborghini Untamed*, *Porsche Unleashed* and *Armed & Dangerous* – bundled together, bringing new cars and modes to keep you playing Criterion's superb racer. But it's £15.99 for the three of them. They're good additions, but it's a push to expect you to pay almost what the game itself costs these days for a few extras. **55%**



MIGHT & MAGIC: CLASH OF HEROES GAME

It's a kind of magic! Eventually

Publisher Ubisoft Developer Cappybara Games Release Date Out Now Price £9.99
Players 1 Genre RPG

IF YOU GIVE up on games if they're not giving you uber-mega-super-fun within the first five minutes, you'll hate this. If you have patience to work through the slow opening of *Clash Of Heroes*, then you'll find a bizarre but compelling game. Think *Puzzle Quest*, except you're matching groups of three to attack and defend. Just a shame it's hard work at the start. **84%**



The King's Speech

PRICE: £14.99 **SOUND:** DTS-HD MA 5.1 **DIRECTOR:** Tom Hooper
STARRING: Colin Firth, Geoffrey Rush, Helena Bonham Carter

TH... TH... THIS FILM is really rather good. You may take one look at the plot synopsis – upon becoming King, George VI must overcome his stammer in order to address the nation after the start of WWII – and dismiss it as a boring waste of two hours of your life. Quite the opposite is true. The performances are top-notch, Colin Firth proving again that he's getting better with each film released, and Geoffrey Rush bringing his signature warmth and affability to the screen as vocal coach Lionel Logue. The premise might sound a bit dull, but this is a moving and empowering tale about the strength of human companionship.

RATING: ★★★★★



Black Swan

PRICE: £17.99 **SOUND:** DTS-HD MA 5.1 **DIRECTOR:** Darren Aronofsky **STARRING:** Natalie Portman, Mila Kunis, Vincent Cassel

BLACK SWAN IS a dark, seductive and intelligent psychological thriller that's about ballet in much the same way *The Wrestler* is about wrestling. It explores the physical and psychological demands of the craft, but here there's more of an intensity, introduced through the film's exploration of psychosis and its many visual tricks. The film's not perfect but it's still an intoxicating and intimate portrayal of one ballerina and her fractured mental state. Also, Natalie Portman gets off with Mila Kunis. Sold.

RATING: ★★★★★



The Walking Dead Season 1

PRICE: £23.99 **SOUND:** Dolby TrueHD 5.1 **CREATOR:** Frank Darabont **STARRING:** Andrew Lincoln, John Bernthal

SOMETIMES IT FEELS like the zombie apocalypse has already occurred. They're everywhere – movies, comic books, games, TV. But *The Walking Dead* is that rare entry into the zombie genre – a TV series that deals with the concept intelligently. It's not perfect but its ability to deliver those instances of poignancy are worth the low points. The series deviates from the comics, but this matters little when the writers are still taking the show in interesting directions. We can't wait to continue the ride in Season Two.

RATING: ★★★★★



Seth Rogen's new car was a bit impractical when he just needed to pop down the shops.



DETAILS

Price
£15.99 (3D version)
£17.99
Sound
DTS-HD Master
Audio 5.1
Director
Michel Gondry
Starring
Seth Rogen, Jay Chou, Cameron Diaz, Christoph Waltz

The Green Hornet

Another sub-par Gondry film?
That really stings

When news first started to trickle in about *The Green Hornet* our levels of anticipation arose with each new announcement. First there was the odd casting of Seth Rogen in the lead role. Then we heard that Christoph Waltz would be appearing as crime boss Chudnofsky – exciting news considering his excellent performance as Colonel Hans Landa in *Inglorious Basterds*. Finally, we learnt Michel Gondry was directing – one of the most imaginative filmmakers around and surely a man with some interesting ideas when it comes to 3D.

However, despite having such top talent behind and in front of the camera, *The Green Hornet* feels limp and uninspired.

It's largely the fault of the script. Dealing with a billionaire playboy turned masked crimefighter, *The Green Hornet* teases originality in that its heroes decide to become vigilantes as a drunken lark. They wear suits rather than spandex, and pose as lawbreakers rather than heroes. And yet despite the fact that the script was penned by Rogen and Evan Goldberg there are just as many good laughs as

jokes that fall flat. Waltz's character is a less interesting version of that which he played in *Inglorious Basterds* and Jay Chou's Kato is played like he's only half aware he's acting in a film.

And yet it's Gondry who disappoints most. Very little of his idiosyncratic style is felt in the tedious scenes of dialogue, and when the action scenes do come they drag on for far too long. There are some cool visual tricks but there's far too little creativity to be found in the film.

The Green Hornet is a case of an unconventional team making a very conventional film. You can almost feel Gondry's boredom increasing with every scene, and if you're still watching by the end then you have a better attention span than us.

VERDICT

This doesn't feel like a Michel Gondry film – more a Seth Rogen film that Gondry just happens to be a part of. A great pity really, as we expected so much more from the director's first foray into 3D.

RATING: ★★★★★

Movies that should be videogames



SHAOLIN SOCCER

Let's be honest: football is far too serious. The World Cup; the Premiership; Sky Sports News; championships; leagues; post-match interviews; conversations with mates down the pub; who kicked what, where and to who – it's all treated with a kind of po-faced sincerity we usually reserve for political debates or deciding what sandwich we're going to have for lunch (it's an important decision).

Not so when Stephen Chow is in charge of things – the Hong Kong actor, director and all-round funny guy. In *Shaolin Soccer*, a film that mixes kung fu with *The Beautiful Game*, football is a sport of superhuman ability and power and also something to have a good giggle about.

We can imagine the game now, blending the traditional football game setup with action-adventure elements.

There would be the ability to jump over opponents; activate bullet time and engage in midair wire fu; and shoot ridiculous curve balls that can bend round opponents in an S shape.

You would also be able to fire power shots so violent that they cleave through the pitch, set the ball on fire, and then turn it into a tiger.

Come on EA Sports. You know you want to do it.

Terrible videogame movie of the month



MAX PAYNE WAS an embarrassing, intolerable, excruciating mess of a film that shared only the basest elements with its inspiration. The celluloid should have been burnt the second they ejected it from the camera.



Classic Blu-ray

Fantastic Blu-rays you need to have in your collection



#4 The Shining

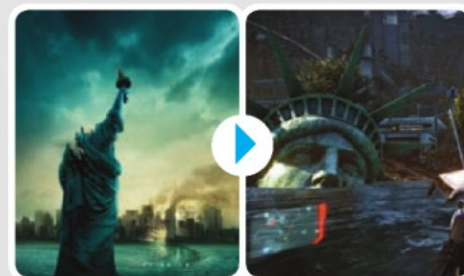
Price: £19.99 **Sound:** Dolby Digital 5.1 **Director:** Stanley Kubrick
Starring: Jack Nicholson, Shelley Duvall, Danny Lloyd

THE SHINING IS about as close as you'll come to perfection in the horror genre. Stanley Kubrick's reputation as an uncompromising director is well documented, but it was while making *The Shining* that these elements of his directorial approach truly came to the fore. *The Shining* was a long and arduous production, Kubrick didn't get on with his actors, the shooting script changed constantly and principal photography alone took over a year to complete.

But it all resulted in a film that wasn't just effective and terrifying, but also artful. Stephen King may have labelled Kubrick as a man that "thinks too much and feels too little", but that approach led to a film filled with hugely memorable moments: the woman in the bathtub; the twins; "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy"...

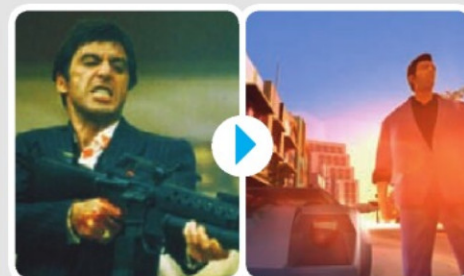
We appear to have become a little over serious here. Allow us to remedy that: *The Shining's* well scary and that innit? Lol.

Movie Moments In Videogames



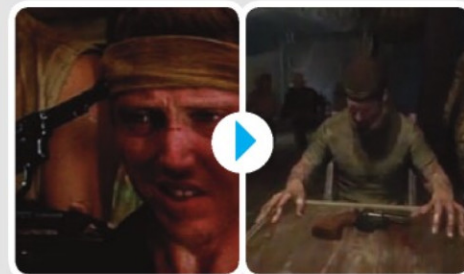
Cloverfield/Crysis 2

OKAY, SO THERE isn't really a *direct* comparison between the two, but it's difficult to see a meticulously re-created version of Manhattan getting torn apart by alien weaponry and not be reminded of the devastation occurring in Matt Reeves' film.



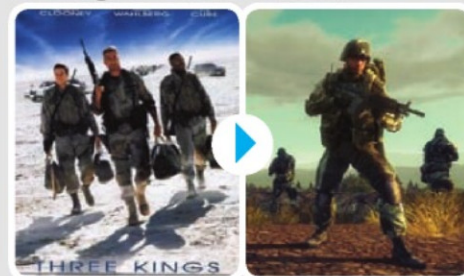
Scarface/Grand Theft Auto: Vice City

VICE CITY IS packed to the brim with filmic references. The game shares most similarities with *Scarface*, though, particularly the chaotic ending battle in Tommy Vercetti's mansion.



Deer Hunter/Black Ops

THERE ARE PLENTY of Vietnam War movie references in *Black Ops*, but the most overt takes place when Mason and Woods are forced to play Russian roulette. The incident mirrors Robert De Niro and Christopher Walken's harrowing scene in *The Deer Hunter*.



Three Kings/Battlefield: Bad Company

IT'S NOT ONE scene in *Bad Company* that plays out like *Three Kings*, but the entire narrative, which sees three soldiers go AWOL to nab some bullion. Games do this all the time. *The Force Unleashed* well ripped off those *Star Wars* films.

UNDER THE INFLUENCE... The games that changed it all



◆ The Duke loved to dick about.



DUKE NUKEM

Release date December 1997 • Publisher GT Interactive • Developer 3D Realms •
 Games it influenced Half-Life • Deus Ex • Crysis 2

If *Duke Nukem: Total Meltdown* (or simply *Duke Nukem* as it was known here in Europe) hadn't reared its fat head in the mid-Nineties, would things be different nowadays? Probably not, no. Something else would eventually have come about and revitalised a flagging genre, of that we have little to no doubt. But the fact of the matter is it's the Duke who came and popularised the reinvention of the FPS and pushed the genre into

and gunning any more – it became a case of freeform exploration, or secrets within secrets, of taking time out to do something other than shooting things (unless it was shooting pool).

So many things we take for granted were made popular via the Duke. Air duct crawling to take alternate routes? Duke. Deformable terrain and destructible scenery? Duke. Pixelated nudity and sexism? Duke. The game is remembered,

but it's not always remembered for the swingeing cuts it made to gaming's

landscape. All in one fell (bleach blond) swoop.

It's funny that our original review of *Duke Nukem* praises the game for 'reviving' a 'flagging' genre, as it's exactly the sort of thing we're crying out for now. We need an FPS revival and – as luck would have it – there's a new Duke in town. Ironically, *Duke Nukem Forever* looks set to be a decidedly old-school take on the genre he once helped push into a new era.

WHAT WE SAID: Issue 29 • 90%

Duke Nukem is a truly first-rate shoot-'em-up, and that it runs too fast is a testament to the programming prowess on offer. As Duke himself will tell the competition: "Come get some!"

It was the Duke that first popularised the notion of 'dicking about' in FPS games

new directions we hadn't even considered before. It should be taken into account that *Duke Nukem* took near to a couple of years to arrive on PSone, making its first splash on PC back in January 1996, so its influence actually stretches back a bit further. Just a point worth making.

Anyway, it was the Duke that first popularised the notion of 'dicking about' in FPS games. We have no idea if it was the first game where you could go for a slash, play with arcade machines, give money to strippers or switch on movies, but it certainly brought these little distractions to the mainstream. And with these little distractions came far more immersion than we'd seen in any FPS before. It became a case of not just running



◆ Duke Nukem helped to reinvent and revitalise the FPS genre.

YOU NEVER PLAYED THIS



CHRONO CROSS

If you're one of our North American-based readers or have been something of an importer since the days of the PSone, you might have actually played this. *Chrono Cross* was a popular title on its release back in Space Year 2000, selling 1.5 million copies and making people aware that Squaresoft was capable of something other than *Final Fantasy*.

But then, we never officially got it over here, and most people in Europe will still overlook the

fact that... well... *Chrono Cross* is probably better than the PSone's *Final Fantasy* games.

We're not even going to bother backing that statement up with facts or opinions masquerading as facts. Frankly because we don't have to – we've already told you that you never played this, so we can rest easy in our well-founded arrogance and judge you all from our ivory tower made out of pure superiority. That's right – we have a tower made out of ivory *and* a concept.

There's no need to explain that the epic, winding story was deep, involving and touching in equal measure. There's no need to point out the massive list of characters for the player's party (45, according to our sources (Wikipedia)). There's no need to tell you how lovely it looked for its time, or how well it still holds up today. Just no need.

And seeing as it's not been announced for the US PSN, and is unlikely to be released on the EU PSN, we can remain in this particular bubble.

JAPANESE ORGANISED CRIME ACCORDING TO PLAYSTATION

WHATEVER THE CASE in real life, we can safely say the yakuza – effectively the Japanese Mafia – don't glow with blue flames, hit people with park benches and kerb stomp punks on their way to rescue missing orphans. Not every day, at least.



WE COULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT...

THE BOUNCER



WHEN A GAME is hyped as The Best Thing Ever Since The Last Best Thing Ever, your reaction is defensive. "It won't be good!" you silently cry, possibly shaking an imaginary fist, too. Grrr. That'll learn 'em.

For that, we blame *The Bouncer*. *Metal Gear Solid* arrived with almost no hype – the most coverage it could

muster was a two-page preview in CVG, if dusty memory serves. Likewise *GTA III* snuck onto shelves without fanfare. *The Bouncer*, however, was heralded as the future. Imagine *Streets Of Rage* in 3D! The future of gaming! It has at least 12 graphics and 23 physics! Then it was released. Oh. It might not be the worst game ever but *The Bouncer* set a horrible precedent for hype that games have copied since.



RETRO GAMES WE SAID WE WANT TO PLAY AGAIN BUT PROBABLY WON'T



Hogs Of War

THIS TURN-BASED strategy game that came out later on in the PSone's life probably still plays well. How could it really mess up? And we really don't care about the looks of the thing. So what is putting us off playing? Rik Mayall's voice, of course.



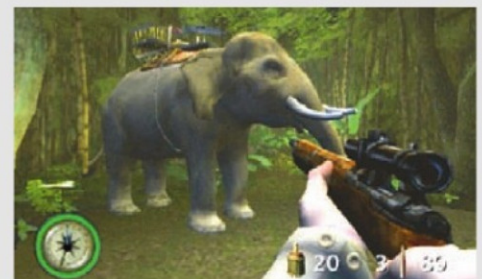
Front Mission 3

WE ASKED ADAM Bar-Nes from NowGamer to tell us a game he wanted to play but would not. His answer: "*Front Mission 3*." Why? "Because I want to play it." But why won't you? "Because it's old." You cannot deny the logic running through that exchange.



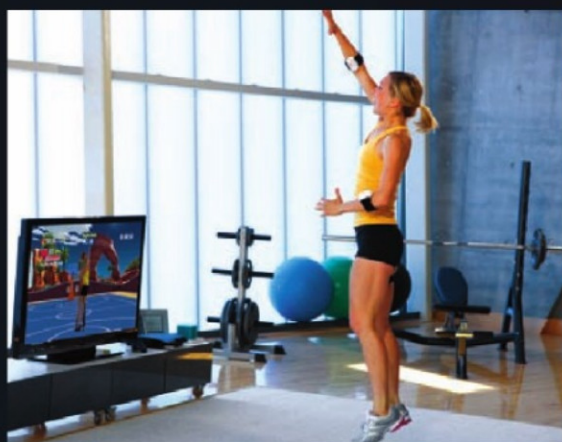
Z

REMEMBER THE BITMAP Brothers? It made some top games on the Amiga, then it kind of didn't make amazing ones any more. But we were reminded of Z and thought 'we must play this immediately'. Guess what happened then?



Medal Of Hono[u]r: Rising Sun

IT SOUNDS LIKE a good idea, replaying one of the worst entries to the *MOH* series to see if it really was that pump. Then we realise we can't be bothered: it would be a massive waste of time and there are newer, worse games to play.



With a room not even as big as this, you too can lose weight!



LEARN! how to punch, so you can punch people who call you fat!



STRETCH! an awkward band across your body until it gets all covered in sweat!



"I used to look like Jabba The Hutt's uglier, fatter sister until I started the videogame fitness programme – now I look like his uglier, thinner sister!"



My Fitness Coach Club

BUT WAIT! THERE are more fitness games beyond EA and its MIRACLE FAT CURE! Ubisoft's entry to the FITNESS market is definitely USEFUL, but when you have to FORK OUT for a Move controller as well as the game it gets a bit pricey. EA Sports Active 2, on the other HAND, is more than USEFUL and – thanks to HEFTY price cuts – is cheap, too. This feature is NOT paid for by EA Sports.



Get Fit With Mel B

If you don't fancy working out in front of your TV WITHOUT the support of a former SPICE GIRL, then *Get Fit With Mel B* is perfect for YOU. Offering Move-related workouts with the SCARY one from the AWFUL mid-Nineties pop group, *GFWMB* flounders in comparison to the SUPERIOR EA Sports Active 2. Also: this feature is STILL NOT paid for by EA Sports. Still, Mel B can HELP you LOSE some weight if you can be bothered.

PLAY TEST
ANSWERS
THE BIG
QUESTIONSDO FITNESS 'GAMES'
ACTUALLY WORK?

New weight loss secrets revealed! Find how something called 'video games' can cure you of blubber! Read the things THEY don't want YOU to know!

YOU'VE BEEN FOLLOWING the progress of **Play**'s own Ian Dransfield as he set out on an epic Fitness Quest (IX), using *EA Sports Active 2* to try to lose some of the excess flab he had accumulated through many nights of beer and fried chicken.

It wasn't easy, but with EA's MIRACLE FAT CURE, the portly scribe was able to trim multiple pounds from his ample frame, leaving him far less offensive to the eyes of thinner, more normal people. The MIRACLE FAT CURE can only work so much magic, after all.

Where other reviews simply concentrated on getting the words down and out of the door, INDEPENDENT RESEARCH by **Play** led to an extended, months-long review of the system offered by *EA Sports Active 2*. In it, the magazine discovered that, contrary to POPULAR BELIEF, not all fitness games are from the same mould as *Wii Fit*. In fact, **Play**'s extended, in-depth and definitely brilliant research revealed that while *Wii Fit* makes you STAND STILL and BALANCE for a few minutes, *EA Sports Active 2* makes

you RUN AROUND like an idiot and SWEAT a lot. Even more so when wearing lab coats, as required when carrying out any research for Playtest. What more empirical evidence is required? None, that's how much. Yet **Play**, in its endless quest for truth and to show YOU, the PUBLIC that it CAN BE DONE, only went above and beyond the call of duty. No, not that *Call Of Duty*.

So what does EA's MIRACLE FAT CURE involve? After months of research **Play** SURMISED it requires dozens of different exercises all capable of being DONE in the player's own HOME. But it doesn't just end there, oh no – the MIRACLE FAT CURE also requires users to change their DIET so they aren't eating nothing but deep-fried PIZZA all day every day.

With these simple steps – sticking to the PLAN and eating less CRAP food – you can achieve results on a par with those **Play**'s chunky critic has seen. Guaranteed. No need to take UNTRUSTWORTHY pills, no need to have INVASIVE surgery and no need to be bullied by muscular people on

TELEVISION. EA's MIRACLE FAT CURE is simple, safe and can be kept well within the homestead. Even if it does sometimes not register your movements properly, and EVEN IF the personal trainer's voice is WELL ANNOYING, like.

While even EA will surely admit its MIRACLE FAT CURE isn't a complete replacement for regular trips to the gym, nor will it work on those who AVOID eating CORRECTLY, **Play**'s researchers had to admit surprise at how well done the whole package is. Through many hours of running in front of a TV, it was decided that *EA Sports Active 2* would actually cause users to 'get knackered'.



Zumba Fitness

We couldn't actually get hold of a copy of this before going to print, so instead we'll have to RELY on MAKING SOMETHING UP. Like all the true professionals do. *Zumba Fitness* involves DANCING to get FIT, has some music and has been out on other consoles for ages now, annoyingly. Still, it uses Move, which means... very little... and people do like dance workouts as it feels LESS like you're ACTUALLY working out.



Going to the gym

Who can really be bothered going to the gym, though, honestly? Yes, it WORKS, and is PROVEN, but you have to watch MUCH BETTER-LOOKING people in MUCH BETTER SHAPE than you lifting MUCH HEAVIER WEIGHTS than you could ever dream of. And who wants to put themselves through that kind of absolute horror? Only a masochist, obviously. And Simon Miller.

IN ALL SERIOUSNESS THOUGH – DID IT WORK?:

Yes. A combination of *EA Sports Active 2* four times a week and a healthy diet meant Fat Ian managed to lose enough weight to legally change his name to 'Less Fat Ian'. He shed roughly two stone (13kg/28lbs) in two-and-a-bit months. Basically, this is a fitness 'game' that does work, as long as you put in the effort required and make the changes necessary. MIRACLE FAT CURE!*

(*not a miracle)

ARTISTIC LICENCE

Can videogames live up to their concept art?

Even the worst games can look great when a skilled artist puts pen to paper. The only limit is the artist's imagination; they can take a game's concept and conjure up crumbling interiors and vast panoramic vistas. They can create characters that look as if they could punch through a skyscraper. They can

conceive of huge monstrosities that fill entire rooms. If they can picture it, they can draw it. And yet so often, little of this creative energy filters through to the end product. Let's look at some examples of initial concept art and the end product, and see which games stick closest to their original vision.

Assassin's Creed II

Assassin's Creed II's visuals are impressively similar to the concept art that preceded them. They may lack some of the artistic flourishes that make the original illustrations so animated, but you can see architecture, landscapes, clothing and even game mechanics mirrored in both artwork and game. Full marks then!

Rating: 10/10

CONCEPT



Here we see an authentic re-creation of Saint Mark's Basilica...

Ubisoft ensured its Renaissance architecture was meticulously re-created.

...and here's an authentic re-creation of a Renaissance impalement.

IN-GAME



IN-GAME

CONCEPT

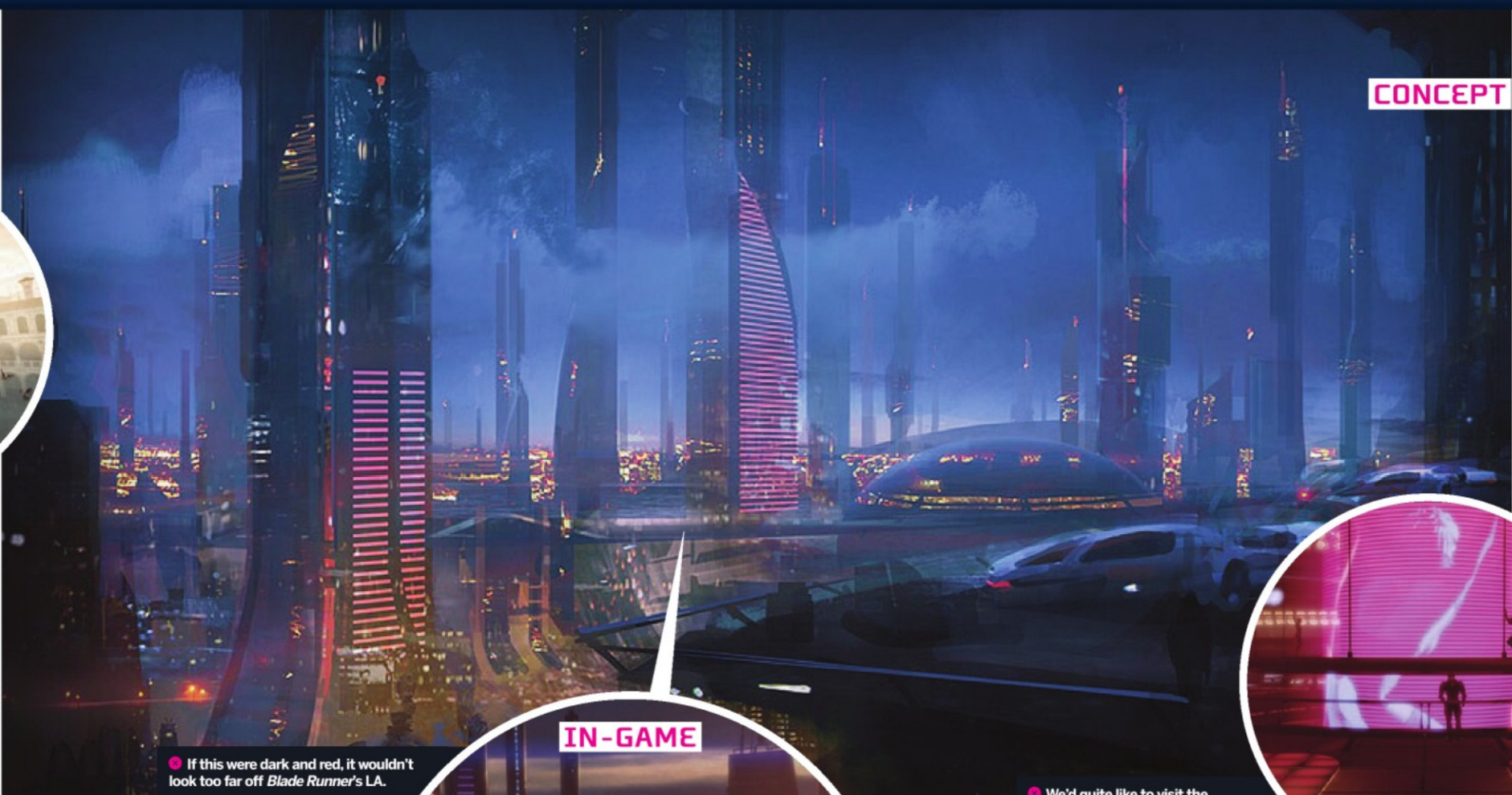


Even the gondolas are as detailed in-game as in the concept art.

IN-GAME



IN-GAME



CONCEPT

● If this were dark and red, it wouldn't look too far off *Blade Runner's* LA.

IN-GAME

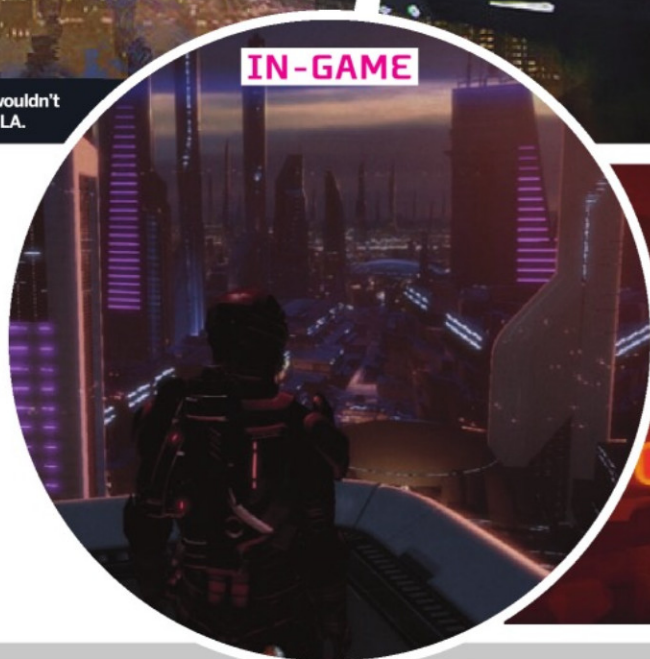
● We'd quite like to visit the Afterlife club. What? It looks fun!

IN-GAME

Mass Effect 2

There are some startling similarities between the artwork and the finished product in *Mass Effect 2*. Environments like Illium or the Afterlife Club are instantly recognisable and look almost as good in-game as they do in the original artwork. We'll be paying close attention to the first concept art released for *Mass Effect 3*, then.

Rating: 9/10



CONCEPT



CONCEPT

IN-GAME

Shadow Of The Colossus

Getting the concept art right for *SOTC* was a must, given how integral the creatures were to the game. There were many creatures that didn't make the final cut, though, such as a boar-like colossi that quite frankly looked stupid, and an upside down arachnid-looking creature we wish had made it into the finished game.

Rating: 7/10



CONCEPT

IN-GAME

Metal Gear Solid

Yoji Shinkawa's dynamic art style makes all of *Metal Gear Solid's* characters look slightly cooler than they do in polygon form. We wouldn't mind a game that uses that aesthetic style throughout – *Okami* meets *Metal Gear Solid*, perhaps? It could work! Hideo Kojima – make it happen!

Rating: 5/10



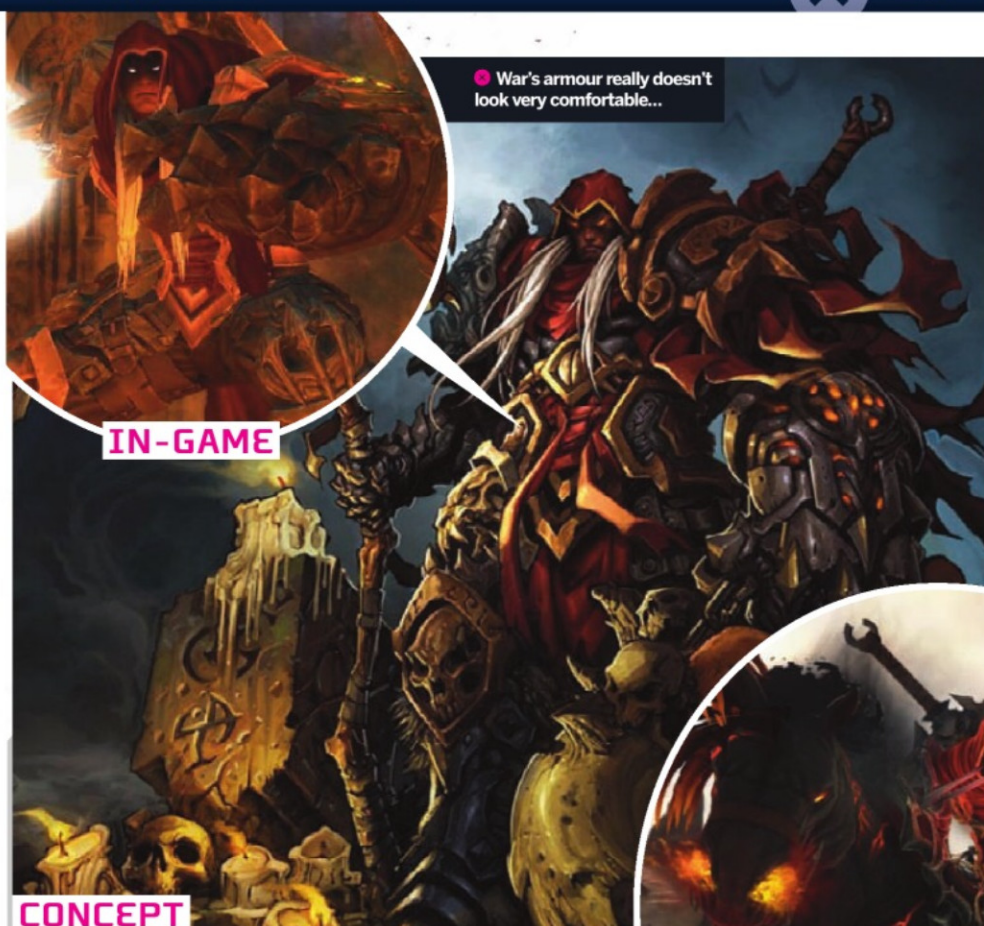
CONCEPT

IN-GAME

Final Fantasy XIII

FFXIII's concept art looks like someone ate a load of sugar, washed it down with a pint of glitter, then gargled a gallon of paint and threw it up on a canvas. The art is a yucky splash of effervescent colour, and you can see some of this vibrancy has made it to the game's cut-scenes, combat, environmental backdrops and menus.

Rating: 6/10



IN-GAME

CONCEPT

Darksiders

With Joe Mad in the role of creative director, *Darksiders*' art was never going to disappoint. It's chunky, kinetic and exciting. Some of this dynamism made it to the game, but not all of it; *Darksiders* looks like a comic book in action but it loses some of that muscularity, as if you were watching *Commando* down the wrong end of a telescope.

Rating: 6/10

CONCEPT



IN-GAME

...if we were War we'd wear a comfy polo neck and a nice pair of loafers.



IN-GAME

CONCEPT

Enslaved

After playing *Enslaved* we're looking forward to the inevitable apocalypse. Before Ninja Theory's game we thought it would be all brown, grey and bloody boring, but it turns out the post-apocalyptic 'wasteland' will actually be bright and incredibly colourful like a breezy summer's garden. Sounds alright to us. We might trigger the apocalypse ourselves just to get some sun.

Rating: 7/10



CONCEPT

IN-GAME

CONCEPT



Okami

In a way *Okami* is concept art. The whole game looks like it's been drawn on a sheet of aged parchment, its characters defined by thick brush strokes and an attractive muted colour palette. To be honest, if Capcom ever released an HD version of *Okami* (HINT HINT) then we reckon you'd have trouble telling it apart from some of the artwork that preceded it.

Rating: 7/10



IN-GAME

CONCEPT



IN-GAME



IN-GAME

● Ryan looked like this when we nearly didn't finish the magazine in time.

CONCEPT

God Of War II

We can imagine the job description for Sony's Santa Monica Studio concept artists – "Must be able to draw muscles that look like they're attempting to tear through the skin. Also, really, *really* angry faces." *God Of War II*'s concept art contains a lot of both. Do you think these guys ever just draw Kratos kicking back with a beer gut and a bored look on his face just for a laugh?

Rating: 7/10



IN-GAME

● And Ian looked like this when he fought a zombie on the back of a giant hawk.



CONCEPT



IN-GAME

CONCEPT



Dynasty Warriors

Check out this guy. He looks like he's seen many things. He's *done* many things. He's probably killed an entire battlefield of men by doing nothing other than shooting them a nasty glance. We really wish we were as manly as him sometimes. The actual game, though? It's about as cool and dangerous as an episode of *Countryfile*.

Rating: 2/10

CONCEPT



IN-GAME

Mirror's Edge

Mirror's Edge's unique aesthetic clearly made it through to the game with little in the way of change – the crisp look and red, white and yellow colour scheme being apparent in both artwork and finished game. We don't know why the runners have such a problem with their government, to be honest. They may be totalitarian despots, but at least they keep their city spotlessly clean.

Rating: 8/10

CONCEPT



IN-GAME

Killzone 2

For *Killzone 2*, all the artists did was select the fill tool then colour in every object with slightly different shades of brown. Of course we're being facetious here – *Killzone 2* is actually quite a colourful and beautiful game – but you can still see that its grim, utilitarian aesthetic was decided upon from the very outset of production.

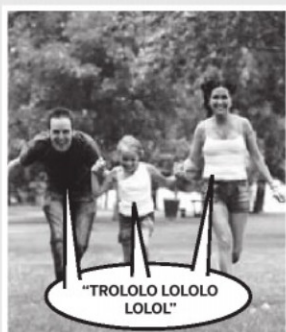
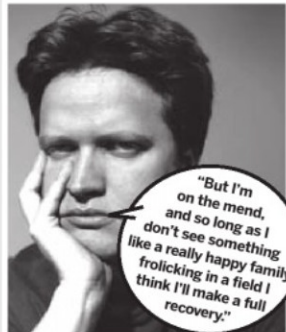
Rating: 8/10

PLAY# Playlist

If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

GAME UNDER

Stock photography, fictitious stories, real lives...



PS3 LISTING



game	issue	score
3D Collection	195	75%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Ar Tonelico Qoga: Knell Of Ar Ciel	203	27%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
More than enough additions to take the <i>Assassin's Creed</i> formula into modern classic territory.		
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Single-player is fairly impressive but take it online and it's bordering on genius. This is quite possibly the best shooter on PS3 today.		
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The most over-the-top, inventive, consistently thrilling, overtly sexual, guiltily enjoyable Japanese action game we've played in years.		
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
With its diverse roster, stunning visuals and furiously paced gameplay, <i>Continuum Shift</i> is a must-have for beat-'em-up fans.		
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blur	193	86%
Borderlands	185	80%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
Treyarch's first genuinely brilliant entry to the series and a standard-bearer for fast-paced online shooters.		

game	issue	score
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Catherine*	203	48%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Create	199	71%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Crysis 2	203	72%
Damnation	181	38%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
The point where the <i>Dead Space</i> series stepped up and became something to be genuinely excited about.		
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
As good as it was when we reviewed it on import, but with a better translation and it's also available here. One of PS3's best games.		
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%
It's just like playing <i>Guitar Hero</i> for the first time all over again, although <i>DJ Hero</i> is slightly more expensive.		
DJ Hero 2	198	88%
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	203	86%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
EyePet: Move	197	84%
F1 2010	197	86%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
<i>Fallout 3</i> lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.		

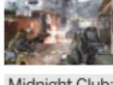
game	issue	score
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
The best football game made marginally better. The crown held by <i>PES</i> seems like so long ago now.		
FIFA 11	197	91%
FIFA continues to improve and continues to dominate with this latest addition to the superior footy franchise.		
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
FIFA World Cup 2010	192	70%
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlegrounds	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
Gl Joe	183	22%
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
Two of the greatest PS2 action games of all time come together at a bargain price. Essential purchase.		
God Of War III	190	88%
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Two fine expansions bundled together and without the need for <i>GTA IV</i> to play them. What more could you want.		
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
<i>Guitar Hero III</i> is another great rhythm-action beast, sure to delight fans and newcomers alike. So, grab a guitar and rock out!		
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1	200	21%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter: The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
It will certainly split opinion, but we absolutely love it. A valuable addition to the wonderful world of gaming.		
Heavy Rain: Move Edition	198	70%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Homefront	203	69%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

game	issue	score
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
inFamous	180	81%
International Cricket 2010	194	61%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
John Daly's ProStroke Golf	197	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
 Sony has proven that it has a PlayStation platform capable of supporting a truly world-class FPS. Best graphics ever.		
Killzone 3	202	80%
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2:		
The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
 Create, share and play. Sackboy heads up Media Molecule's highly customisable and adorable platformer.		
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%
 An amazing game and something to get involved with even if you can't create your own stuff.		
Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
LOTR: Conquest	175	52%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
Madden NFL 11	196	84%
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	189	68%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel Vs Capcom 3	202	88%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
 Why the hell are you reading this when you should be playing Mass Effect 2 instead? GO GO GO.		
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%

Crysis 2 PS3	72%
WWE All Stars PS3	82%
Shift 2: Unleashed PS3	66%
PlayStation Move Heroes PS3	54%
Tiger Woods PGA 12: The Masters PS3	65%
Dynasty Warriors 7 PS3	32%
Tomb Raider Trilogy PS3	86%
WSC Real 11: World Snooker Championship PS3	69%
Yoostar 2: In The Movies PS3	60%
Moto GP 10/11 PS3	64%

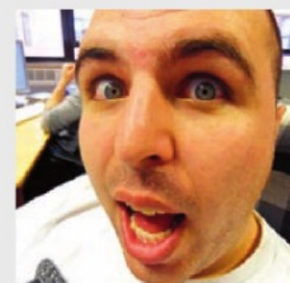
game	issue	score
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
 Not the final Metal Gear Solid game after all then. Still brilliant though, and still largely incomprehensible.		
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
 A questionable single-player mode is rendered null and void by the best multiplayer we've ever played.		
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	202	38%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
 The best kart racer by far on the PlayStation 3, but combined with incredible levels of creativity. If you love LBP you'll love this, too.		
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
Moto GP 10/11	204	64%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
nail'd	201	61%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA 2K11	199	82%
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
 Hot Pursuit is one of the best arcade racers of all time - pure, unadulterated bliss in game form.		
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
Nier	192	54%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	198	89%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	172	80%
PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%

Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars PS3	79%
Catherine PS3	48%
Final Fantasy IV: The Complete Collection PS3	80%
PixelJunk Shooter 2 PSN	90%
Swarm PSN	78%
Back To The Future: It's About Time PSN	71%
Alien Breed 3: Descent PSN	61%
Ghostbusters: Sanctum Of Slime PSN	51%
Slam Bolt Scrappers PSN	73%
Hard Corps: Uprising PSN	78%

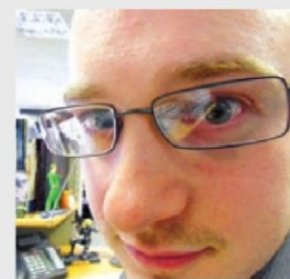
game	issue	score
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	194	69%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Racket Sports	198	37%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	203	54%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
 Relocates the familiar GTA formula to a superbly realised new setting and, in many ways, is unlike anything else as a result.		
Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare	199	87%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	190	86%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
 With its impressive set pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, Resistance 2 is one of the best FPSs on the PS3.		
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Rock Band	169	94%
 Rock Band could be the best rhythm-action game ever. Especially if you're playing with a group of friends. Even better after a few beers.		
Rock Band 2	179	96%
 With the incredible tracklist, tweaked engine, and new modes, this is easily the best rhythm-action game currently available.		
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
R.U.S.E.	197	82%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%
 Simply the best rally game on the PS3. Unless simulation is your bag then you'll want to go for Colin McRae. Not much in it, really.		
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
Simpsons Game	160	82%
SingStar	159	80%
Singstar Guitar	199	70%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Singularity	195	80%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Soul Calibur IV	169	94%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%

*denotes import review

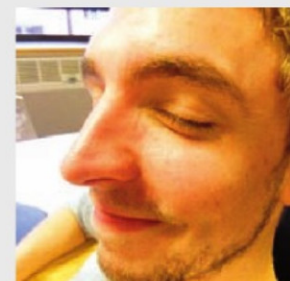
PLAY'S DIARY



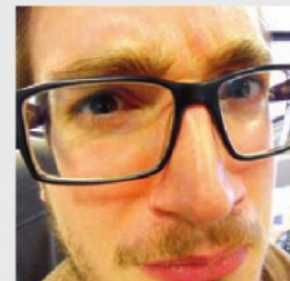
DAY 7 – RYAN: So far the issue has gone really well. We're hitting our weekly deadlines in full, team morale is high and I really can't see anything going wrong in the foreseeable future. Nope, nothing at all. No siree. No problems. Wait...



DAY 7 – JON: Na na na na na na na, newsiiiiing! Na na na na na na na, newsiiiiing! Newsiiiiing, newsiiiiing, newsiiiiing! Na na na na na na na, NEWSIING! Also: *Batman*. News and *Batman*. Oh yes.



DAY 7 – CHRIS: Fshhhheee thing... 'bout... fmg abooout that's... hic... I love you mate – you're my besssst maaate mate. Hic. I wa... I want a kebab. Ohhh man. Burger. Bab. Burbab. Hic. WE SHOULD GET MARRIED cos you're by mest bate...



DAY 7 – IAN: Awake at five again. Raining. Again. The faint pattering brought back the memories of that day. *That day*. Get out of my head – I can't get it out. I'll never get it out. It'll always be there. Always haunting me.

Boots vs Boots



Boots

DO YOU HAVE a hankering for some footwear? At the same time, do you want your feet to not only be covered, but also protected against things like blunt-force trauma... or water? If so, there's an invention out there that will suit you. It's called 'boots' and it's like shoes, only bigger and thicker, being used by people with real jobs. And criminals, too.

We've also had reports that these 'boots' can come in what's known as 'fashionable' varieties. Though our sources also confirmed this nullified the intended effectiveness of the 'boot' protection by about 84 per cent, removing as it does things like steel toe caps and thick, leather outer layers.

In summation, 'boots' are very useful. Unless you end up with the less-useful 'boot' varieties out there, in which case they're less useful.

Massive metal-plated goth boots out of 10



Boots

BOOTS ISN'T JUST the name of some things you put on your feet – it's also a word used by people in order to give a recognisable name to a chain of chemist shops found the world over. Will wonders never cease? In it people can buy plasters, hairspray, travel plugs – frankly, it's amazing. Also Ian weighs himself there for Fitness Quest IX.

Oddly, users of Boots can actually pick up items to help augment their boot-wearing experience. As such it's hard to say the two are in such direct a competition as we might have you believe. The two are actually symbiotic in more ways than we initially understood. It's a complex ecology; one that needs to be studied more before we can truly understand whether Boots and boots can actually be pitted against each other.

Still, we have to put a score. **Wellington boots out of 10**

game	issue	score
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%
Just beating <i>Blur</i> to the chequered flag, <i>Split/Second</i> is a wonderfully intense racing game in the <i>Burnout</i> mould.		
Sports Champions	196	83%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
The fact that you're buying a lot of stuff you've probably bought already is the only drawback to what is the best fighter ever made.		
Tekken 6	184	94%
There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, <i>nothing</i> , stops <i>Tekken 6</i> from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game.		
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
The Club	163	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
This proves once and for all that Western RPGs are better than Japanese ones! Sort of. Whatever, <i>Oblivion</i> is an awesome game.		
The Fight	199	42%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The Orange Box	161	93%
Five brilliant games for the price of one, what on Earth could be better than that? Nothing, that's what. <i>Absolutely nothing</i> .		
The Saboteur	187	67%
The Shoot	199	76%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	194	60%
Tiger Woods PGA 12: The Masters	204	65%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X	177	75%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	196	69%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	199	53%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UEFA EURO 2008	165	62%

game	issue	score
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
<i>Among Thieves</i> has proven itself to be a real work of class. It's one of the best games in recent years.		
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vanquish	197	93%
A brilliant surprise from the developer of <i>Bayonetta</i> and easily one of the best games we've played in 2010.		
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WSC Real 11: World Snooker Championship	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2009	173	74%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2010	185	77%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2011	199	63%
X-Blades	178	54%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%
Yostar 2: In The Movies	204	60%

PS STORE LISTING

1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Classic, frantic and utterly brilliant arcade action from Sega. A fine example of what the company is best known for.		
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	70%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%
Bomberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
We had to wait quite a while, but time is what we have plenty of both with and for <i>Braid</i> . Simply brilliant.		
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Call Of Duty Classic	188	90%
It doesn't have <i>MW2</i> 's polish but it's a great game both as a slice of history and in its own right.		
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Catan	195	85%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	168	70%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer Red Alert 3	185	68%
Commander's Challenge	175	44%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Costume Quest	199	70%

game	issue	score
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Crazy Taxi	200	80%
Crescent Pale Mist	200	70%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Dark Mist	164	53%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
.detuned	186	50%
Digger HD	186	52%
Diner Dash	190	66%
Driver	171	90%
With the most cinematic car chases ever seen in a game, <i>Driver</i> made a huge impact in 1998. Despite rosey graphics, it's still a playable title.		
Droplitz	184	91%
<i>Droplitz</i> is a superb puzzler that blends Rez-style layers of music, pipes and dials to create one of the most satisfying puzzlers in years.		
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome II	202	83%
echochrome	169	85%
Elefunk	170	45%
Explodemon	203	70%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
This scrolling-fighter classic from 1989 makes an almost faultless appearance on PSN. Stick it on your download list.		
Final Fantasy VII	181	96%
Even after all these years it still holds up. In fact, our mark seems to have gone up 3% since 1997.		
Final Fantasy VIII	190	90%
A truly engaging RPG – if you've never experienced the game before then make sure this is the next thing you download.		
Final Fantasy IX	195	90%
Never gets the love it deserves, but this PSN release gives you the chance to experience Square Enix's refreshing RPG all over again.		
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
fIOW	151	90%
Another 90% game for the PS3, another lesson in simple, addictive gameplay. <i>fIOW</i> is an innovative title available on the Network.		
Flower	176	85%
Frogger Returns	190	35%
Funky Lab Rat	201	70%
Geon	175	71%
Ghostbusters: Sanctum Of Slime	204	51%
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	191	75%
GTI Club+	174	72%
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	194	72%
Hard Corps: Uprising	204	78%
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperballoid HD	188	70%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%

game	issue	score
Joe Danger	194	96%
Simply put, <i>Joe Danger</i> is one of the best games you'll currently find on the PSN. Buy it. Buy it now.		
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Kula World	172	71%
Kung-Fu Live	201	42%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
Lara is back to her best in <i>The Guardian Of Light</i> . <i>Tomb Raider</i> fans will love it and for just £9.99 everyone else should, too.		
Lead & Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Lemmings	151	79%
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Magic Carpet	179	65%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers	202	84%
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	90%
This game has an astonishing amount to offer if you're prepared to plunge into its murky depths.		
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Metal Gear Solid	187	93%
While it looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise. Simply essential.		
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Microbot	202	51%
Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge Special Edition	195	94%
The HD remake of arguably the best game in the <i>Monkey Island</i> series is a more than welcome addition to the PSN.		
Motorhead	173	60%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	183	60%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
Bold, bright, insanely addictive – this re-imagining of the retro classic is an essential addition to anybody's PSN library.		
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	189	94%
So addictive it should come with some sort of government warning. Terrific value for money and a superb little puzzle game.		
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
The second game in the <i>PixelJunk</i> series is great fun and brilliantly addictive. Buy it and play it constantly for hours on end!		
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
Q-Games delivers excellence on the PSN once again with its <i>PixelJunk</i> series, this time in the form of a classic shoot-'em-up.		
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
Imagine the first <i>PixelJunk Shooter</i> , but better, but actually a bit worse because it's not as fresh. There you go.		
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
Polar Panic	190	65%
Populous: The Beginning	46	70%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	58	53%
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%

game	issue	score
Rayman	01	76%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1	194	90%
Clever, funny and taxing in all the right ways, we're very happy that the Freelance Police are on PlayStation 3.		
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2	194	92%
This is even better than the first episode due to the fact it has better puzzles and even funnier dialogue.		
Savage Moon	175	87%
Scott Pilgrim Vs The World	197	77%
Section 8	193	78%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Slam Bolt Scrappers	204	73%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype	195	70%
Sonic 4: Episode One	199	82%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Syphon Filter	48	93%
Gabe Logan's gritty PSone adventure has shadowed all that came after. As always, the original really is best.		
Snakeball	176	92%
Stacking	203	88%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Skater 2	178	40%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Swarm	204	78%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
Telltale Games' excellent modern addition to the <i>Monkey Island</i> franchise finally sees the light of day on PSN. Go pick it up.		
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tetris	202	84%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Snake meets Pac-Man meets GoogleMaps. <i>The Last Guy</i> is yet another innovative and compelling addition to the PSN's line-up.		
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
The Secret Of Monkey Island Special Edition	195	92%
LucasArts' classic point-and-click adventure gets an HD makeover and will hopefully be the first of many classics heading to PSN.		
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles in Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	198	53%
Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Tumble	198	70%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment	192	87%
Wakeboarding HD	192	65%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
WipEout	01	89%
WipEout HD	172	84%
Wolfenstein	181	70%

game	issue	score
Worms	179	91%
There's a reason <i>Worms</i> is still going strong, and that's because people never get tired of its fun personality and addictive gameplay.		
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Battle Islands	201	80%
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
Zuma	182	78%



LISTING

A Space Shooter For Two Bucks	202	55%
Alien Havoc	186	68%
Angry Birds	202	93%
Flinging birds at stuff for four times the price of the original in a less-functional fashion than before has never been so much fun.		
Bloons	186	65%
Brainpipe	186	70%
BreakQuest	186	45%
Edge	202	85%
Field Runners	186	85%
Fortix	186	57%
Funky Punch	186	49%
Hero Of Sparta	186	57%
I Must Run!	202	70%
Kahoots	186	88%
NOVA: Near Orbit Vanguard Alliance	202	63%
Pinball Fantasies	186	90%
<i>Pinball Fantasies</i> was originally released on the Amiga and features four tables and some excellent pinball gaming.		
Puzzle Scape	186	75%
Sky Force	202	68%
Tetris	186	93%
How it is possible to make Tetris feel so fresh and so much fun again we don't know, but it's managed here.		
Vempire	186	67%
Who's That Flying?!	202	64%



LISTING

300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
Ace Combat: Joint Assault	194	79%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	190	45%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Portable	194	84%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bomberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	134	94%
Despite being more of a 'best of' than a completely new game, <i>Legends</i> is the best racing game on the PSP.		
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
Crisis Core – Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%

*denotes import review

GAMING CLICHES & VIDEOGAME LOGIC

Doors for decoration. NOTHING ELSE

WHAT IS THE main function of a door? Is it to hinder progress? To act as an obstacle? To funnel someone in a set direction they absolutely cannot deviate from? Is it to act as a distraction to the monotony of walls, breaking up the scenery and giving the eye a rest from garish wallpaper? Or is it to be a door?

If you play games – which you probably do, we'd be willing to bet – you will have encountered dozens, hundreds, maybe even



thousands of doors throughout videogames of all types, budgets, genres and quality levels. And in every single one of them you will have found doors that do not function as doors are supposed to. It's a definite irritant.

In the past it was simply a case of developers not being able to put anything on the other side of doors, or not



being able to let players blow doors up. It was annoying, but it was necessary. Now it's gone well into the realm of being annoying, but *annoying*. It's making us hate doors, and that can't be a good thing.

We live in the future now, so surely it can't be a technological thing stopping us from opening these doors? It must be possible to make them breakable; to make locks



destructible. It must just be a conspiracy against the gamers of the world, bringing them up to believe they have no real choice in the direction they go. Or something.



GARY MCTRUTH'S WORLD OF RECOMMENDATIONS

THIS MONTH: QUANTUM THEORY

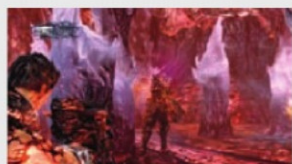
THE LITTLE EXPERIMENT

I ran last month to try to get you lot onboard with my way of thinking worked wonders. Apparently *Rogue Warrior*'s sales increased by 329 per cent following my impassioned



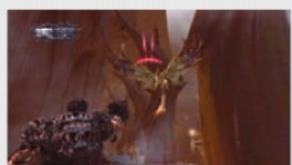
recommendation. Although I did hear some dissenting voices claiming that 329 per cent of zero is zero.

They're just idiots who don't appreciate my truth-telling majesty. And I'm going to prove it with another recommendation that will



literally – *literally* – blow all of your minds up like you've just been assaulted with pure brilliance bullets.

It's called *Quantum Theory*. Just take that in for a minute. Think about it. Confused? You should be – because it's all science and stuff, and while I'm well good at science I know



you lot aren't, so you're right to be befuddled.

But don't let the intense sciencing of *Quantum Theory* put you off – it's amazing. Really, it is. It's like a game, except with some big men on it, and it's really got guns in it!



Guns! In a videogame! What are the odds!

But the best thing about *Quantum Theory* – aside from how much we can laugh at the ridiculous 29 per cent it received in **Play 197** – is something called 'cover'. We will never see the likes of it in any other game, ever.

game	issue	score
Dante's Inferno	191	76%
Dead Or Alive: Paradise	192	56%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
An absolute must-have for RPG fans, and one of the best titles available on the PSP. A simply brilliant game.		
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy	203	79%
Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days	190	87%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
echochrome	169	85%
echoshift	191	73%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Everybody's Tennis	195	88%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
EyePet	199	77%
F1 2009	187	66%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	147	81%
FIFA 11	198	69%
FIFA World Cup 2010	193	65%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy IV: The Complete Collection	204	80%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghost Recon Predator	200	60%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	188	55%
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
Gods Eater Burst	202	88%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta	199	79%
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
Bar some combat control issues, <i>GTA: Chinatown Wars</i> has perfectly translated to the PSP. It's a must-have game.		
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
Successfully taking the <i>GTA</i> formula and putting it on one UMD of pure goodness, this is one of the PSP's best games.		
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
Half-Minute Hero	191	87%
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman!	186	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	187	71%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep	196	88%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
Refined in certain areas and slightly worse in Create mode but still a fantastic addition to PSP's lineup.		

game	issue	score
LocoRoco	143	94%
We called this the definitive PSP title in our review, and it is a game that no PSP owner should be without.		
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lord Of Arcana	202	65%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
Medieval Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
Metal Gear Acid 2	138	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	193	92%
A fantastic entry in the <i>Metal Gear Solid</i> series and one of the best games on PSP. Wonderful.		
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
A proper <i>Metal Gear Solid</i> game on a portable machine. It was never likely to disappoint, and it didn't. A great title.		
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
ModNation Racers	193	70%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Mytran Wars	179	85%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	136	68%
Naruto Shippuden Legends: Akatsuki Rising	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
No Heroes Allowed	199	69%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Patchwork Heroes	192	85%
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoCrois	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ – Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	194	52%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%
Ridge Racer	132	91%
Arguably the best launch game on the PSP, <i>Ridge Racer</i> still stands up as one of the finest racing games for the system.		
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
Unplugged comes highly recommended. It's superb – there are few better rhythm-action games on the handheld.		
Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%

game	issue	score
Sega Rally	158	90%
Very nearly as good as its PlayStation 3 counterpart. Which is a good thing because that's the best rally game money can buy.		
Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
Smash Court Tennis	154	58%
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	190	71%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
New modes and characters keep things interesting, while fights are as hectic and solid as ever.		
Spider-Man 3	162	32%
Spinout	149	81%
Spinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
Split/Second: Velocity	200	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
In the absence of a 'real' MGS game, it's left to Gabe Logan to carry the stealthy torch, and he does a fine job.		
Tekken 6	187	90%
Fantastic to look at and fast and fluid to play, <i>Tekken 6</i> is the best game of the series on PSP.		
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
<i>Tekken: Dark Resurrection</i> is instantly playable and provides the PSP's first great brawler.		
Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together	202	81%
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
The 3rd Birthday	203	80%
The Con	153	59%
The Cube	153	64%
The Eye Of Judgment: Legends	191	57%
The Godfather Mob Wars	136	66%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
The Sims 2	137	71%
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
UFC Undisputed 2010	197	80%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyria Chronicles 2	196	87%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord!? 2	192	78%
WipEout Pulse	159	86%
WipEout Pure	138	91%
Exceeding all of our expectations as to what a handheld <i>WipEout</i> game could be, <i>Pure</i> is an essential PSP purchase.		
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%

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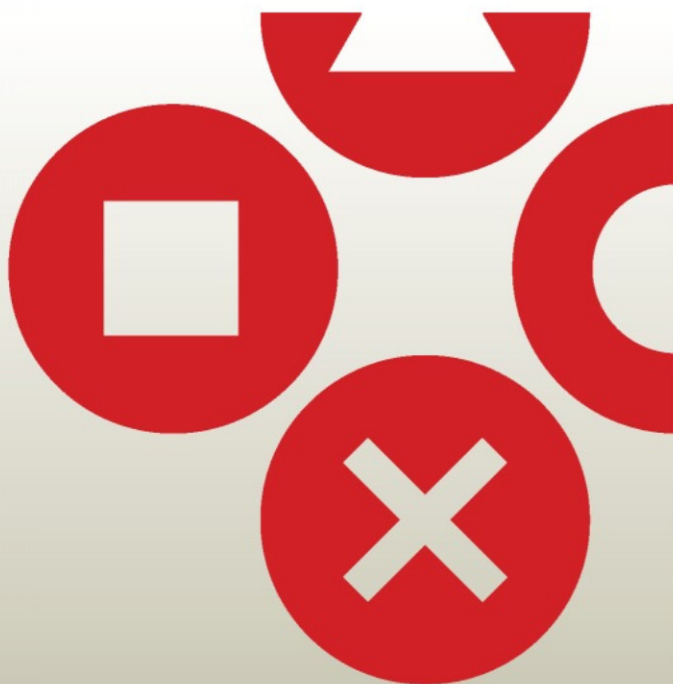
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LA. NOIRE

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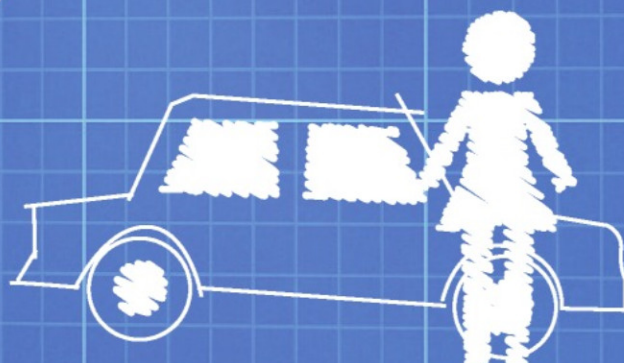
'SEXIST'? DON'T YOU MEAN SEXY?

Once again our journalistic ways unearth more secret documentation – this time featuring all of the aspects of multiplayer that were cut from Duke Nukem Forever. We heard something about 'sexism', but as gamers we literally have no idea what that means, so we present Gearbox's document in full and unaltered



'JUSTIFICATION MODE'

This mode would see players hunting one babe out of many. The babe being hunted at any particular point changes according to which is the most scantily clad. The logic behind this being the one most scantily clad is obviously 'asking for it'. Obviously.



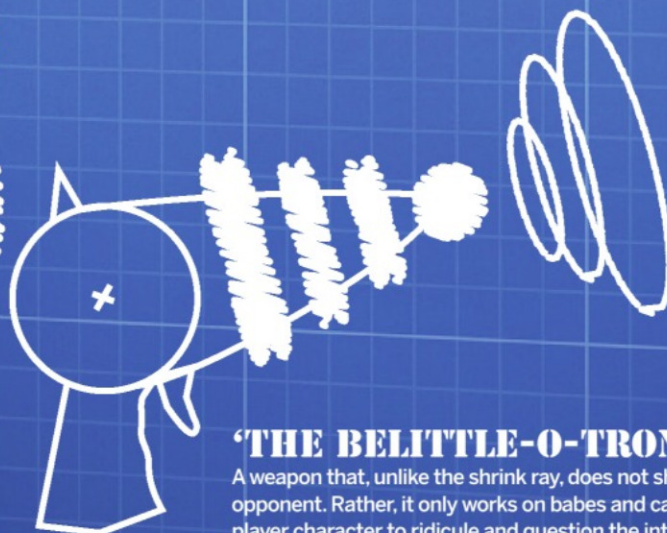
'BABE RACER'

A racing-centric multiplayer mode, where the best player of each round begins the next round with a babe behind the wheel. As such they are naturally worse at driving because DO YOU GET IT WOMEN ARE BAD AT DRIVING AH HA HA HA WE ARE SO EDGY AND FUNNY.



'OFFSIDE'

A rule to be introduced only in team-based online modes where officials can declare players offside. Obviously when women are in charge of this game mode there are either never any offsides called, or when they are they're completely wrong.



'THE BELITTLE-O-TRON'

A weapon that, unlike the shrink ray, does not shrink your opponent. Rather, it only works on babes and causes the player character to ridicule and question the intelligence of said babe in front of a crowd of his male friends, in order to establish NATURAL DOMINANCE.



'THE PAY CEILING'

A swift press of the ⊗ button when facing a babe will cause them to be given a wad of cash (NB amount is proportionally less than a man in the exact same position would get).



'THE CAPTURE KITCHEN'

All capture points for babes will be kitchens, as that is where women belong so it is only right that we return them to their favourite places in the world.



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